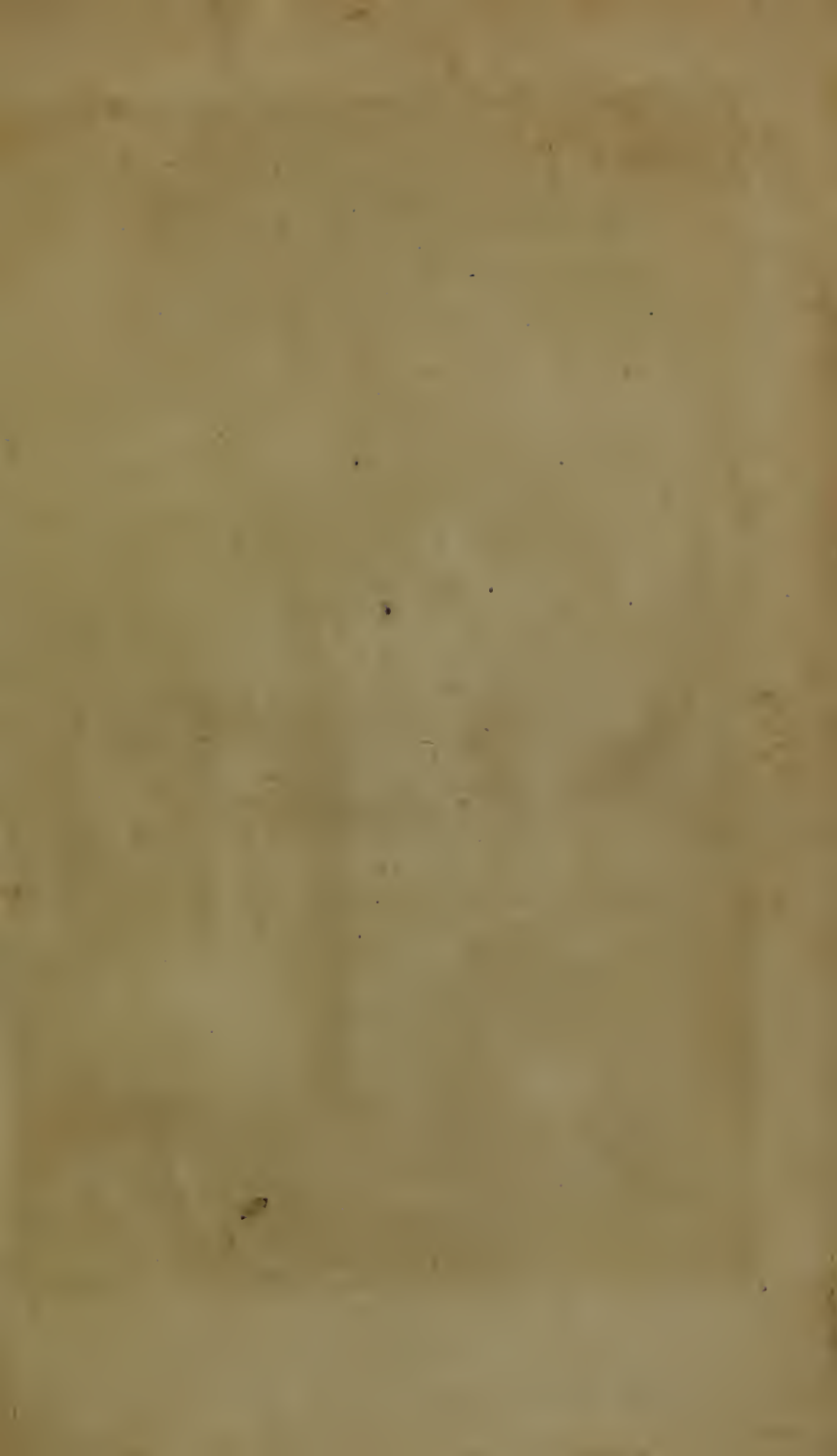


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BÉARN

AND

THE PYRENEES :

A LEGENDARY TOUR

TO THE

COUNTRY OF HENRI QUATRE.

BY

LOUISA STUART COSTELLO,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES," "A PILGRIMAGE TO AUVERGNE,"
ETC.

With numerous Illustrations.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO

MISS BURDETT COUTTS,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE DEDICATED WITH MUCH RESPECT AND AFFECTION

BY

HER SINCERELY OBLIGED

HUMBLE SERVANT,

LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

LONDON,

MARCH 16, 1844.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN I first indulged the inclination, which I had long entertained, of visiting the famous castle of Chinon, and the equally interesting abbey of Fontevraud—the palace and tomb of our English kings—and paused on my way in “the lovely vales of Vire,” and gathered in romantic Brittany some of her pathetic legends, I thought I should have satisfied my longing to explore France; but I found that every step I took in that teeming region opened to me new stores of interest; and, encouraged by the pleasure my descriptions had given, I set out again, following another route, to the regal city of Rheims, visiting the vine-covered plains of Champagne and Burgundy, and all their curious historical towns, till I reached the *dominion*

of Charles the Seventh at Bourges, to become acquainted with whose gorgeous cathedral and antique palaces is worth any fatigue, From thence I wandered on to the beautiful *Monts Dore*s, and the basaltic regions of unexplored *Le Velay* ; and, after infinite gratification, I once more turned my steps homeward ; but, like *Sindbad*, I felt that there was much more yet to be explored ; and I had visions of the romantic and delightful realms, which extend where once the haughty heiress of *Aquitaine* held her poetical courts of *Love* and *Chivalry*. The battle-fields of our *Black Prince* were yet to be traced ; the sites of all the legends and adventures of the most entertaining of chroniclers, *Froissart*, were yet to be discovered ; and the land of mountains and torrents, where the *Great Béarnais* passed his hardy childhood, was yet unknown to me.

I therefore again assumed my “ cockle hat and staff,” and, re-entering the Norman territory, commenced exploring, from the stone bed of the *Conqueror*, at *Falaise*, to the tortoise-shell cradle of *Henry of Navarre*, at *Pau*.

Not inferior to my two former pilgrimages, in interest, did this my third ramble prove. How many “old romantic towns” I passed through; how much of varied lore I heard and found amongst the still original and, even now, unsophisticated peasantry; how numerous were the recollections which places and things recalled, and how pleasant were the scenes I met, I have endeavoured to tell the lovers of easy adventure—for any traveller, with the slightest enterprise, could accomplish what I have done without fatigue, and with the certainty of being repaid for the exertion of seeking for amusement.

In succession, I paused at Le Mans, the scene of the great Vendéean struggle, where the majestic cathedral challenges the admiration of all travellers of taste; at Poitiers, full of antique wonders; in the region of *the Serpent lady*, Melusine; at Protestant La Rochelle, with all its battlements and turrets, and the most beautiful bathing-establishment in Europe. At mysterious Saintes, and all its pagan temples and arches; at Bordeaux, the magnificent; on the Garonne, and by its robbers'-castles; at

Agen, with its *barber troubadour*; in the haunts of Gaston de Foix and Jeanne d'Albret and her son; in the gloomy valleys of the proscribed Cagot; and where the mellifluous accents of the Basquaise enchant the ear. All the impressions made by these scenes I have endeavoured to convey to my readers, as I did before, inviting them to follow my footsteps, and judge if I have told them true.

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* The Drawings in this work were made on the spot, by Miss COSTELLO, Mr. DUDLEY COSTELLO, Madame FRANCISQUE MICHEL, of Bordeaux, and other friends; and the Wood-cuts and Lithographs are executed by Mr. THOMAS GILKS.

BEARN AND THE PYRENEES.



Castle of Falaise.

CHAPTER I.

HONFLEUR—DEJAZET—THE SAILOR PRINCE—LE MARI—LISIEUX—
LA CROIX BLANCHE—ARRIVAL AT FALAISE—GUIBRAY—CASTLE OF
FALAISE—THE LITTLE RECESS—ARLETTE—THE FATHER—THE
INFANT HERO—THE UNCLE—ARLETTE'S TEARS—HER RECEPTION.

WITHIN ten leagues of the interesting town of Caen, where William of Normandy and his queen lie buried, the traveller, who devotes a short space of time to a search after the picturesque, may,

without straying too far a-field, find what he desires in the clean, bright, gay town of Falaise, where the hero of the Conquest was born.

From Southampton to Havre it requires only twelve hours to cross, and, as was the case with myself and my companions, when, at the end of August 1842, we began a journey, whose end was "to be" the mountains which divide France from Spain, if the city of parrots is already familiar to the tourist, he has only to take the steam-packet, which in four hours will land him at Caen, or enter the boat which crosses the fine bold river to Honfleur. In an hour you arrive at Honfleur, after a very pleasant voyage, which the inhabitants of Havre are extremely fond of taking: a diligence starts from the quay, and proceeds through an avenue of a league's length between beautiful hills, orchards, and corn-fields, to the strange old town of Lisieux, to which we proceeded.

One of our fellow-travellers in the diligence was a smart, lively looking young woman, whose resemblance to the celebrated actress Dejazet, whom we had very lately seen in London, was so striking as to be quite remarkable. Her tone of voice, her air and manner, as well as her features, reminded us strongly of the *artiste* whose warm reception in England, where we are supposed to be correct even to fastidiousness, has not a little amused the Parisians at our expense. Whatever

may be the objections to Dejazet's style, certain it is that her imitation of the manners of the class of *grisettes* and peasants is inimitable; not a shade, not a tone, is forgotten, and the *truth* of her representations is proved at every step you take in France, either in the provinces or in Paris.

Our little talkative companion had much to relate of herself and her husband, whom she described as a piece of perfection; he had just returned from a whaling expedition, after several years' absence, and they were now on their way to Lisieux to visit her relations, and give him a little shooting. He had brought back, according to her account, a mine of wealth; and, as she had incurred no debts during his absence, but had supported herself by opening a little *café*, which she assured us had succeeded admirably, they were proceeding, with well-filled purses, to see their only child who was in the keeping of its grandmother. She told wondrous histories of his exploits amongst the ice, of his encounters with the natives—"les Indiens," of the success of all his voyages, and the virtues of his captain, who was an Englishman and *never spoke to his crew*, but was the most just man in the world, and ended by saying that when she met with English people she felt in *Paradise*.

Although we listened to her continued chattering

with amused attention, it was far otherwise with some quiet, silent, women who sat beside us; we soon gathered, by certain contemptuous glances which they exchanged, that they did not give credit to half our little Dejaset was telling; and when, to crown the whole, she related a story of a beautiful maiden of Lisieux, who had been distinguished by the notice of the Duke de *Nemours* when he visited that place on his way to join *his ship* at Havre, they could support their impatience no longer, and broadly contradicted her on the ground that the Prince de Joinville and *not* Nemours was the sailor.

Nothing daunted, our gay whaler's wife insisted on every part of her history being true, asserting that she must know best, and if the young prince had *left the navy* since, it was not her affair.

As she approached Lisieux she became more and more animated, darting her body half way out of the window every minute to look out for her *papa* or her other relations;—at length, with a scream which would have secured Dejaset three rounds of applause, she recognised her parent in a peasant *en blouse*, trudging along the road carrying his bundle—on his way, no doubt, as she assured us, to see her sister, who lived at a village near. Tears and smiles alternately divided the expression of her countenance, as she now feared her sister was ill, and now rejoiced at seeing her father.

All was however happily settled when the coach stopped and she sprang out into the arms of her papa, who had followed the diligence, and came up out of breath; and it was then that we became aware that a remarkably ill-looking, dirty, elderly, Jewish featured man, to whom she had occasionally spoken on the journey, was the identical perfection of a *mari*, of whom she had been boasting all the way. The incredulous listeners, whom she had so annoyed, now revenged themselves by sundry depreciatory remarks on the appearance of this phoenix, whom they pronounced to have the air of a tinker or old clothesman, and by no means that of the hero he had been represented.

As it was raining violently on our arrival at Lisieux, the town presented to us but an uncomfortable appearance; and as we had to search for an hotel, and were at last obliged to be content with one far from inviting, our first impression was by no means agreeable; nor does Lisieux offer anything to warrant a change in the traveller's opinion who considers it dreary, slovenly, and ruinous. There is much, however, to admire in the once beautiful cathedral, and the church of St. Jacques, both grand specimens of the massive architecture of the twelfth century.

In this town lived and died the traitor Bishop of Bayeux, Pierre Cauchon, who sold the heroic Jeanne d'Arc for English gold. An expiatory

chapel was erected by him in the cathedral, where it was hoped the tears of the pious would help to wash his sins away ; but no one now remembers either him or his crime, for we asked in vain for the spot ; and when prayers are offered at the shrine of the Virgin in the chapel dedicated to her, which we eventually discovered to be its site, not one is given to the cruel bishop, whose ill-gotten money was therefore expended in vain ; for the centuries it must have required to rescue his soul from purgatory cannot have expired by this time. The churches are being restored, and building, as usual in all French towns, is going on : when numerous ugly striped houses are removed, and their places filled up, the principal square of Lisieux may deserve to be admired, though whether it will ever merit the encomium of an old lady who resides in it, and who assured us it would in a short time be *superbe*, time will determine. The public promenades are good, and the views round the town pretty, but we did not feel tempted to wait for finer weather, and took our departure for Falaise with little delay.

The drive from Lisieux to Falaise is charming ; and, although the appearance of the hotels is not in their favour, there is nothing to complain of in regard to cleanliness or attention : at least so we found it at La Croix Blanche, where the singular beauty of our hostess added to the romance

.

of our position, perched, as we were, on a balcony without awning, in a building which had evidently been part of an old tower. It is true that we should have preferred something rather less exposed when we found ourselves confined for a whole day, in consequence of the pouring rain, and found that a stream of water had made its way from our balcony into each of our rooms; whose bricked floors were little improved by their visit. Our suggestion of covering the way, in order that, in wet weather, both the dinner and its bearers might be sheltered, appeared to excite surprise, though our attendants came in constantly with their high caps wet through and their aprons soaked.

Our nearly exhausted patience, as we gazed hopelessly on the dull sky of an *August* day, was at length rewarded; and the sun, which had obstinately concealed himself for several days, burst forth on the second morning of our arrival, and changed by its power the whole face of things at Falaise. We lost no time in taking advantage of the fine day which invited us, and sallied forth, all expectation, into the streets, which we found, as well as the walks, as dry as if no rain had fallen for months; so fresh and bright is the atmosphere in this beautiful place.

The town is clean and neat; most of the ruinous, striped houses, with projecting stories, such

as deform the streets of Lisieux, being cleared away ; leaving wide spaces and pure air, at least in the centre-town, where the best habitations are situated. There are other divisions, less airy and more picturesque, called the fauxbourgs of Guibray and St. Laurent, and le Val d'Ante ; where many antique houses are still standing, fit to engage the pencil of the antiquarian artist.

The churches of Falaise are sadly defaced, but, from their remains, must have been of great beauty. The Cathedral, or Eglise de St. Laurent, is partly of the twelfth century ; the exterior is adorned with carving, and gargouilles, and flying buttresses, of singular grace ; but the whole fabric is so built in with ugly little shops, that all fine effect is destroyed. The galleries in the church of La Trinité are elaborately ornamented, as are some of the chapels, whose roofs are studded with pendants. Much of this adornment is due to the English, under Henry V., and a good deal is of the period of the *renaissance*.

The church of Guibray was founded by Duke William, as the Norman windows and arches testify ; but a great deal of bad taste has been expended in endeavouring to turn the venerable structure into a Grecian temple, according to the approved method of the time of Louis XIV. A statue of the wife of Cœur de Lion was once to be seen here, but has long disappeared. That princess resided in this

part of Falaise, at one period of her widowhood, and contributed greatly to the embellishment of the church.

There are many columns and capitals, and arches and ornaments of interest in the church of St. Gervais, defaced and altered as it is ; but it is impossible to give all the attention they deserve to these buildings, when the towers of the splendid old castle are wooing you to delay no longer, but mount at once the steep ascent which leads to its walls.

Rising suddenly from the banks of a brawling crystal stream, a huge mass of grey rocks, thrown in wild confusion one on the other, sustains on its summit the imposing remains of the castle, whose high white tower, alone and in perfect preservation, commands an immense tract of smiling country, and seems to have defied the attacks of ages, as it gleams in the sun, the smooth surface of its walls apparently uninjured and unstained. This mighty donjon is planted in a lower part of the height ; consequently, high as it appears, scarcely half of its real elevation is visible. Its walls are of prodigious thickness, and seem to have proved their power through centuries of attack and defence to which it has been exposed ; careless alike of the violence of man and the fury of the elements. Adjoining the keep are ranges of ruined walls, pierced with fine win-

dows, whose circular arches, still quite entire, show their early Norman construction. Close to the last of these, whose pillars, with wreathed capitals, are as sharp as if just restored, is a low door, leading to a small chamber in the thickness of the wall. There is a little recess in one corner, and a narrow window, through whose minute opening a fine prospect may be seen.

This small chamber, tradition says, was once adorned with "azure and vermillion;" though it could scarcely have ever presented a very gay appearance, even when used as the private retreat of the luxurious master of the castle. However, such as it is, we are bound to look upon this spot with veneration; for it is asserted, that here a child was born in secrecy and mystery, and that here, by this imperfect light, his beautiful mother gazed upon the features of the future hero of Normandy.

However unlike a bower fitted for beauty and love, it is said that here Arlette, the skinner's daughter, was confined of William the Conqueror. It is said, too, that from this height, the sharp-sighted Duke his father, gazing from his towers, first beheld the lovely peasant girl bathing in the fountain which still bears her name. In this retreat, concealed from prying eyes, and where inquisitive ears found it difficult to catch a sound, the shrill cry of the wondrous infant was first

uttered,—a sound often to be repeated by every echo of the land, when changed to the war note which led to victory.

Little, perhaps, did his poor mother exult in his birth, for she was of lowly lineage, and had never raised her eyes to the castle but with awe, nor thought of its master but with fear; her pleasures were to dance, on holidays, under the shade of trees with the simple villagers, her companions; her duties, to wash her linen on the stones of the silver stream, as her townswomen do still at the present day—that silver stream which probably flowed past her father's cottage, as it still flows, bathing the base of cottages as humble and as rudely built as his could have been. There might, perchance, have been one, amongst the youths who admired her beauty, whom she preferred to the rest; her ambition might have been to become his bride, her dreams might have imaged his asking her of her father, whose gracious consent made them both happy: in her ears might have rung the pealing bells of St. Gervais—the vision of maidens, in bridal costumes, strewing flowers in her path, might have risen before her view—her lover with his soft words and smiles—his cottage amongst the heath-covered rocks of Noron—all this might have flitted across her mind, as she stood beside the fountain, beneath the castle walls, unconscious that eyes were gazing

on her whose influence was to fix her destiny. A mail-clad warrior, terrible and powerful, whose will may not be resisted, whose gold glitters in her father's eyes, or whose chains clank in his ears, has seen and coveted her for his own, and her simple dream must be dispersed in air to make way for waking terrors. The unfortunate father trembles while he feebly resists, he listens to the duke's proposal, he has yet a few words of entreaty for his child: he dares not tell her what her fate must be, he hopes that time and new adventures will efface Arlette from the mind of her dangerous lover; but, again, he is urged, heaps of gold shine before him, how shall he turn from their tempting lustre? Is there not in yonder tower an *oubliette* that yawns for the disobedient vassal? He appeals to Arlette, she has no reply but tears; men at arms appear in the night, they knock at the skinner's door and demand his daughter, they promise fair in the name of their master; they mount her on a steed before the gentlest of their band, his horse's hoofs clatter along the rocky way—the father hears the sobs of his child for a little space, and his heart sinks,—he hides his eyes with his clenched hand, but suddenly he starts up—his floor is strewn with glittering pieces—he stoops down and counts them, and Arlette's sorrows are forgotten.

Arlette returns no more to her father's cottage. She remains in a turret of the castle, but not as

a handmaiden of the duchess; her existence is not supposed to be known, though the childless wife of Duke Robert weeps in secret over her wrongs.

All this is pure fancy, and may have no foundation in reality.

“Look here upon this picture and on that.”

Perhaps Arlette did not repine at her fate; she might have been ambitious and worldly, vain and presuming, have possessed cunning and resolve, and have used every artifice to secure her triumph. Some of the stories extant of her would seem to prove this, and some to exculpate her from blame, inasmuch as she believed herself to have fulfilled a sacred duty in conforming to her master's will. When she told her lover that she had dreamt “a tree sprang from her bosom which overshadowed all Normandy,” there was more evidence of policy than simplicity in the communication which was so well calculated to raise the hopes of a great man without an heir; and perhaps it was she herself who dictated the saying of the *sage femme* at her son's birth, who, having placed him *on straw* by her side, and observing that the robust infant grasped in his tiny hands as much as he could hold, cried out—“*Par Dieu!* this child begins early to grasp and make all his own!” At all

events the little hero was "honourably brought up," and treated as if legitimate.

Another version of the story of Arlette is given by an ancient chronicler, (Benoit de S^t Maur,) which is certainly a sufficient contrast to the view I ventured to take of the affair, probably with but little correctness, considering the manners of the period.

It appears that the scruples of the fair daughter of *Vertprès*, the skinner, for his name seems to be known, were dispersed by the advice and injunction of her uncle, a holy personage, of *singular* piety, who dwelt in a hermitage in the wood of Gouffern. Convinced, by his arguments, that Heaven had directed the affection of the duke towards her, she no longer resisted her father's wish, and made preparations as if for a bridal, providing herself with rich habiliments calculated to enhance her beauty. When the messengers of the duke came to fetch her, they requested that she would put on a cloak and cape, and conceal her rich dress, for fear of the jeers of the common people, who would perhaps insult her if she appeared publicly with them; but she replied boldly and proudly, "Does the duke send for me after this manner, as if I were not the daughter of an honourable man? Shall I go secretly, as if I were but a disgraced woman? That which I do is in all honour and respectability,

not from wickedness or weakness, and I am not ashamed that men should see me pass. If I am to be taken to the duke, it shall not be on foot and hidden—fetch, therefore, your palfrey, and let me go as it becomes me.” Her dress is thus described:—“She had clothed her gentle body in a fine shift, over which was a grey pelisse, wide and without lacings, but setting close to her shape and her arms: over this she wore a short mantle conformable and of good taste; her long hair was slightly bound with a fillet of fine silver. It was in this guise, beautiful to behold, that she mounted the courser which was brought for her, and saluted her *father and mother* as she rode away; but *at the last moment she was seized with a trembling, and burst into weeping, covering her fair bosom with her tears.*”

When she arrived, “by a fine moon-light,” at the castle gate, her attendants made her alight, and opened a wicket for her to enter, but she drew back, saying, “The duke has sent for me, and it would seem that he esteems me little if his gates are not to be opened for my passage. Let him order them to give me entrance, or send me back at once. *Beaux amis, ouvrez-moi la porte.*”

The messengers, awed by her dignity, hesitated not to obey her, and she was presently conducted into the presence of Duke Robert, who awaited

her coming in a vaulted chamber, adorned with gilding, where "fine images were represented in enamel and colours." There he received her with great joy and honour, and from that time she possessed all his love.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE ARTHUR—WANT OF GALLANTRY PUNISHED—THE RECREANT
SOW — THE ROCKS OF NORON — LA GRANDE EPERONNIÈRE—LE
CAMP-FERME — ANTIQUITIES OF FALAISE — ALENÇON — NORMAN
CAPS—GEESE—LE MANS—TOMB OF BÉRANGÈRE—CATHEDRAL—
ANCIENT REMAINS—STREETS—THE VEILED FIGURE.

CLOSE to the natal chamber of Duke William may be seen another recess in the thick walls, still smaller and more dismal, to which a ruined window now gives more light than in the days when poor young Arthur of Brittany looked sadly through its loop-holes over a wide extent of country, now all cultivation and beauty, but probably then bristling with forts and towers, all in the hands of his hard-hearted uncle John. After having made his nephew prisoner in Anjou, John sent him to Falaise, and had him placed in this dungeon in the custody of some severe but not cruel knights, who treated him with all the respect they dared to show. An order from their treacherous master soon arrived, directing that he should be put to death; but they refused obedience, and indignantly exclaimed, that the walls of the castle of Falaise should not be sullied by such a crime. Arthur was therefore removed to Rouen, and there less

conscientious men were found to execute the tyrant's will, if tradition, so varied on the point, speak true.

Stephen maintained himself in the castle of Falaise against the father of Henry II., and these walls have probably echoed to the lays of minstrels, whose harps were tuned in praise of the beautiful and haughty heiress of Aquitaine. The fair wife of Cœur de Lion had this castle for her dower, and, for some time, is said to have lived here. Philip Augustus accorded some singular privileges to Falaise, two of which deserve to be recorded.

If a woman were convicted of *being fond of scandal*, and known to backbite her neighbours, they had the right of placing cords under her arms and ducking her three times in the water: after this, if a man took the liberty of reproaching her with the circumstance, he was compelled to pay a fine of ten sous, or else he was plunged into the stream in a similar manner.

If a man were so ungallant as to call a woman *ugly*, he was obliged to pay a fine. This offence was indeed worthy of condign punishment, if the women of Falaise were as pretty formerly as they are now: with their neat petticoats, smart feet in sabots, high butterfly or mushroom caps, as white as snow, scarlet handkerchiefs and bright-coloured aprons, with their round healthy cheeks, lively eyes,

and good-humoured expression of countenance, the Falaisiennes are as agreeable a looking race as one would wish to see, and more likely to elicit compliment than insult.

Many curious customs prevailed in the middle ages in this old town ; and one was formerly portrayed on the walls of a chapel in the church of the Holy Trinity. It was the representation of an execution : the delinquent had injured a child, by disfiguring its face and arms, and suffered in consequence. The culprit was no other than a sow ; and when the crime committed was brought home to her, the learned judges assembled on the occasion pronounced her as guilty of malice prepense ; and in order to hold her up as an example to all sows in time to come, her *face* and *fore legs* were mutilated in a similar manner to those of her victim. The spectacle of her punishment took place in a public square, amidst a great concourse of spectators, the father of the child being brought as a witness, and condemned to stand by during the infliction, as a due reward for not having sufficiently watched his infant. The “viscount-judge” of Falaise appeared on the solemn occasion “on horseback, with a plume of feathers on his head, and *his hand on his side*.” The sow was dragged forth dressed in the costume of a citizen, in a vest and breeches, and “*with gloves on*, wearing a mask representing the face of a man.”

What effect this wise judgment had is not related; probably it produced as salutary a result as most of those exhibitions designed for the amusement or instruction of an enlightened multitude.

The chain of the rocks of Noron, on part of which the castle is situated, is singularly picturesque; and from those opposite, rising from the side of Arlette's fountain, the fine ruins have a most majestic effect; and the prospect for leagues round is extremely beautiful. A soft turf, covered with wild thyme, heath, and fern, makes the meandering walks amongst the huge blocks of moss-mantled stone, tempting and delightful, in spite of their steepness; and the delicious perfume of the fragrant herbs, growing in great luxuriance everywhere, is refreshing in the extreme. The snowy tower of strength, rising from its bed of piled up rock—the broad high walls, and their firm buttresses and circular windows, through which the blue sky gleams—the nodding foliage and garlands of ivy which adorn the huge towers—and, far beyond, a rich and glowing country, altogether present a scene of beauty, difficult to be equalled in any part of Normandy, rich as that charming province is in animated landscape.

We spent many hours of a brilliant summer's day, climbing amongst the rocks, and making sketches of the castle in its different phases, all of which offer studies to an artist: here the majestic

donjon forms a fine object ; there the ruined arsenal ; and farther off the battered walls, separated and hurled down by the cannon of Henri IV. when through this breach his white plume was seen triumphantly waving as he cheered his warriors on to the attack, changing the *six months* proposed by Brissac into *six days*, during which he took the fortress and the town.

An anecdote is related of a heroine of Falaise, whose exploits are recorded with pride by her countrymen, by whom she is called *La Grande Eperonnière*. She had headed a party of valiant citizens, who defended one of their gates, and fought with such determination, as to keep her position for a long time against the soldiers of Le Vert Galant.

The king, when the town was in his power, summoned her before him : she came, and approaching with the same undaunted air, interrupted him, as he was about to propose terms to her, and demanded at once the safety of all the women and aged men of the town of Falaise. Henry was struck with her courage, and desired her to shut herself up in a street with the persons she wished to save, together with all their most precious possessions, and gave her his word that no soldier should penetrate that retreat. He, of course, kept his promise ; and she assembled her friends, took charge of most of the riches of the

town, closed the two ends of the street in which she lived, and, while all the rest of Falaise was given up to pillage, no one ventured to enter the sacred precincts. The street is still pointed out, and is called *Le Camp-fermant*, or *Camp-ferme*, in memory of the event. The heroic Eperonnière was fortunate in having a chief to deal with, who gladly took advantage of every opportunity to exercise mercy.

The town of Falaise is well provided with water, and its fountains stand in fine open squares : a pretty rivulet runs through the greatest part, and turns several mills for corn, oil, cotton and tan ; it is called the Ante, and gives name to the valley it embellishes as it runs glittering along amongst the rugged stones which impede its way with a gentle murmur, making a chorus to the voices of the numerous Arlettes, who, kneeling at their cottage doors, may be seen rubbing their linen against the flat stones over which the stream flows, bending down their heads which, except on grand occasions, are no longer adorned with the high fly-caps which are so becoming to their faces, but are covered with a somewhat unsightly cotton nightcap, a species of head-gear much in vogue in this part of lower Normandy, and a manufacture for which Falaise is celebrated, and has consequently obtained the name of *the city of cotton nightcaps*. However, there is one advantage in this usage — the

women have better teeth than in most cider countries, owing perhaps to their heads being kept warm, and, ugly as the cotton caps are, they deserve admiration accordingly.

A house is shown in one of the streets, called the House of the Conqueror, and a rudely sculptured bust is exhibited there, dignified with his name. Some few tottering antique houses still contrive to keep together in the oldest parts of the town, but none are by any means worthy of note; one is singular, being covered with a sort of coat of mail formed of little scales of wood lapping one over the other, and preserving the remains of some carved pillars, apparently once of great delicacy. One pretty tower is still to be seen at the corner of the Rue du Camp-ferme, which seems to have formed part of a very elegant building, to judge by its lightness and grace; it has sunk considerably in the earth, but from its height a fine prospect may be obtained. There is a public library at Falaise, that great resource of all French towns, and several fine buildings dedicated to general utility; but the boys of the college the most excite the envy of the stranger, for their abode is on the broad ramparts, and their playground and promenades are along the beautiful walks formed on the ancient defences of the castle.

Our way to Alençon, where we proposed to stop

a day, lay through Argentan on the Orne, a pretty town on a height commanding a fine view of plain and forest; the country is little remarkable the whole way, but cultivated and pretty. At Seez the fine, delicate, elevated spires of the Cathedral mark the situation of the town long before and after it is reached; but, besides that, it possesses no attractions sufficient to detain the traveller.

Alençon, the capital of the department of Orne, is a clean, open, well-built town, situated in a plain with woods in all directions, which entirely bound its prospects. The public promenades are remarkably fine, laid out with taste, and a great resource to the inhabitants, who consider them equal to those of Paris, comparing them to the gardens of the Luxembourg. The cathedral, once fine, is dreadfully defaced, and the boasted altars and adornments of the chapels are in the usual bad taste so remarkable at the present day.

A few fine round towers remain of the ancient chateau, now a prison, which is the only vestige of antiquity remaining. There was an exhibition of works of industry and art going on, which we went to see, and were much struck with the extreme beauty of some specimens of the lace called Point d'Alençon. The patterns and delicate execution of this manufacture are exquisite, equalling ancient point lace and Brussels. Some very fine stuffs in wool, transparent as gossamer and of the softest

colours, attracted us, but the severity of an official prevented our examining them as closely as we wished, and as there was no indication of the place where they could be beheld at liberty, we were obliged to content ourselves with the supposition that they were the produce of the workshops of Alençon. As the large gallery in which the exhibition took place was principally filled with peasants in blouses and women with children, perhaps the vigilance of the attendants might not be useless; but whether their proceeding was judicious in refusing information to strangers or persons who might be able to purchase goods which pleased them, is questionable.



Amongst the customary Norman caps to be seen here, we remarked one which we recognised at

once as Breton. The girl who wore it was very pretty, and in spite of the grave demeanour peculiar to her country and a distinguishing trait, was pleased at my wishing to sketch her singular-shaped head-dress, *en crête de coq* : she was from St. Malo, as I had no difficulty in guessing.

Through alleys of crimson-apple trees our road continued, and we were forcibly, and not very agreeably reminded, at almost every step, that there is a large trade carried on in this part of the country in goose down, for flocks of these unfortunate animals were scattered along the road, their breasts entirely despoiled of their downy beauties, offering a frightful spectacle ; the immense numbers exceed belief, and all appear of a fine species. At every cabaret we passed, notices were stuck up informing those whom it might concern, that accommodation for four or five hundred oxen was to be had within ; but we met no private carriages, nor, even in the neighbourhood of large towns, horsemen or pedestrians above the rank of peasants. This is a circumstance so universal in every part of France, that it becomes a mystery where the other classes of society conceal themselves—on the promenades, in the streets and shops, to see a well-dressed person is a prodigy, and the wonder is to whom the goods are sold, which are certainly sparingly enough exhibited.

We had looked forward to much pleasure in a

visit to the ancient town of Le Mans, and its treasure, the tomb of Berangère, for the discovery of which, although a benefit unacknowledged, France and the curious are indebted to the zeal and perseverance of the late lamented Stothard, who sought for and found one of the most beautiful statues of the time under a heap of corn in an old church formerly belonging to the convent of Epau, but converted into a granary in 1820, when, by his entreaties and resolution, the lost beauty was restored to daylight and honour. Not a word of all this is, however, named by any French chronicler, although Bérangère is now the heroine and the boast of Le Mans, the object of interest to travellers, the gem of the cathedral, and the pride of Le Maine.

Nothing can be more majestic, more imposing, or more magnificent than the huge and massive building which towers above the town of Le Mans, and now adorns one side of a wide handsome square, where convents, churches, houses, and streets have been cleared away, without remorse, to leave a free opening in front of this fine cathedral. The *place* is named *des Jacobins*, from one of the vanished monasteries, which a beautiful theatre now replaces, one of the most elegant I ever saw in France, and yet unopened, at the back of which spreads out a promenade in terraces, the site of a Roman amphitheatre. All the houses

round this square are handsome, and a broad terrace before the arcades of the theatre completes its good effect. Numerous flying buttresses and galleries and figures combine to give lightness to the enormous bulk of the cathedral, which, being without spires, would otherwise be heavy ; but the want of these graceful accessories is scarcely felt, so grand is the general character given to it by the enormous square tower, which appears to protect it, and the smaller ones, its satellites. Statues of the countesses of Maine, of nuns, and queens, may still be seen in niches at different heights of the tower, and the portals are enriched with saints and bishops, angels and foliage astonishing the eye with their elaborate grace and beauty. There are thirteen chapels projecting from the main building, that which forms the termination towards the square being the largest. One rose window is remarkable for the elegance of its stone-work, and the form of all the windows is grand and imposing.

This glorious fabric, equal to that of Beauvais, which it resembles, and more extensive, is sufficient of itself to render Le Mans interesting, but it is a town full of objects that delight and please. The streets are all wide, clean, and well-paved ; there are good squares and handsome houses ; and its position on the pretty, clear river Sarthe, from which the banks rise gracefully,

crowned with foliage and adorned with towers and churches, makes the place really charming. There is a promenade, called Du Greffier, formed evidently on the ramparts of an old castle, part of whose massive walls may still be traced among the trees, which are planted in terraces above the river, whose water is as bright and glittering as those of the Loire itself: green meadows and pretty *aits* adorn the stream, and the usual picturesque idleness of fishing is carried on by its banks, while groups of wading washerwomen, in high-coloured petticoats and white caps, enliven the little quays.

The weather was very propitious while we were at Le Mans, and all appeared attractive and agreeable, and we enjoyed our unwearied walks, both in the environs, and in the town, extremely. Although there is a great deal that is entirely new in the principal quarter of the town, where our Hotel du Dauphin, in the spacious Place aux Halles, was situated, yet, to the antiquarian, there is no lack of interest in the antique parts, where much of the original city remains even as it might have been in the earliest times. Roman walls and towers extend in every direction between the three bridges of Ysoir, St. Jean, and Napoleon; and, in the old quartiers of Gourdain and du Pré, arches, pillars, and ruins, attest the antiquity of the spot. We hesitated not to enter these singular old streets,

where the lowest of the population reside, and, as is almost invariable in France, we always found civility and a cheerful readiness to afford us information. The inquisitive stranger is generally, however, obliged, after going through several of the narrow ways which excite his curiosity, to abandon his search after uncertain antiquities, from the inodorous accompaniments which are sure to assail him; and so it was with us when we had visited the *Rue Danse Renard*, *Rue de la Truie qui File*, *Vert Galant*, the *Grande* and *Petite Poterne*, &c. We found ourselves wandering in circles, amongst dwellings that looked as if they must be the same inhabited by the original Gaulish inhabitants, and at length, anxious to pay our daily devotions at the shrine of Bérangère, we ventured on the ascent of an apparently interminable flight of stone steps, between immensely high massive walls, called *Les Pans de Gorron*.

We paused every now and then, on our ascent, to wonder at the appearance of the town, of which, and the river, we caught glimpses at intervals, and to gaze upwards at the strange old Roman walls above us, and the high houses, some with five and six rows of windows in their shelving roofs. At length, after considerable toil, we reached the platform where once stood the chateau, and where still stands a curious building, all towers and tourelles, some ugly, and some of graceful form, the latter

apparently of the period of Charles VI. Immediately before the steps in the square above us rose the cathedral, which we came upon unawares ; and, exactly in front of us, in an angle, partly concealed by the broad shadow, we perceived a figure so mysterious, so remarkable, that it was impossible not to create in the mind of a beholder the most interesting speculations. This extraordinary figure deserves particular description, and I hope it may be viewed by some person more able than myself to explain it, or one more fortunate than I was in obtaining information respecting it. To all the questions I asked of the dwellers in Le Mans, the answers were exclamations of surprise at a stranger having noticed that which had never been remarked at all by any one of the passers by, who classed it with the stones of the church or the posts of the square. Yet surely the antiquarian will not be indifferent to the treasure which, it appears to me, he should hail with as much delight as the discovery of a Druidical monument or a Roman pavement.

Seated in an angle of the exterior walls of the cathedral, on a rude stone, is a reddish looking block, which has all the appearance of a veiled priest, covered with a large mantle, which conceals his hands and face. The height of the figure is about eight feet as it sits ; the feet, huge unformed masses, covered with what seems drapery,

are supported on a square pedestal, which is again sustained by one larger, which projects from the angle of the building. The veil, the ample mantle, and two under-garments, all flowing in graceful folds, and defining the shape, may be clearly distinguished. No features are visible, nor are the limbs actually apparent, except through the uninterrupted waving lines of the drapery, or what may be called so. A part of the side of what seems the head has been sliced off, otherwise the block is entire. It would scarcely appear to have been sculptured, but has the effect of one of those sports of Nature in which she delights to offer representations of forms which the fancy can shape into symmetry.



There is something singularly Egyptian about the form of this swathed figure, or it is like those Indian idols, whose contours are scarcely defined to the eye; it is so wrapped up in mystery, and is so surrounded with oblivion, that the mind is lost in amazement in contemplating it. Did it belong

to a worship long since swept away?—was it a god of the Gauls, or a veiled Jupiter?—how came it squeezed in between two walls of the great church, close to the ground, yet supported by steps?—why was it not removed on the introduction of a purer worship?—how came it to escape destruction when saints and angels fell around?—who placed it there, and for what purpose?—will no zealous antiquarian, on his way from a visit to the wondrous circle of Carnac and the gigantic Dolmens of Saumur, pause at Le Mans, at this obscure corner of the cathedral, opposite the huge Pans de Gorron, and tell the world the meaning of this figure with the stone veil?

Since I left Le Mans, a friend, who resided there some years, informs me the tradition respecting this stone is, that an *English Giant* brought the block from the banks of the river, up the steep ascent of the Pans de Gorron, and cast it from his shoulders against the wall of the cathedral, where it now stands.

Imagination may easily, here in the country, where the sage bard, the great Merlin, or Myrdhyn, lived, induce the belief that this mysterious stone represents the Druid lover of the fatal Viviana;—may this not be the very stone brought from Brociliande, within, or under, which he is in durance; or rather is not this

himself transformed to stone ? Thus runs the tradition :—

THE DRUID LOVER.

“Myrdhyn the Druid still sleeps under a stone in a forest in Brittany ; his Viviana is the cause ; she wished to prove his power, and asked the sage the fatal word which could enchain him ; he, who knew all things, was aware of the consequences, yet he could not resist her entreaties ; he told her the spell, and, to gratify her, condemned himself to eternal oblivion.”

I know to tell the fatal word
Is sorrow evermore—
I know that I that boon accord
Whole ages will deplore.
Though I be more than mortal wise,
And all is clear to gifted eyes ;
And endless pain and worlds of woe
May from my heedless passion flow,
Yet thou hast power all else above,—
Sense, reason, wisdom, yield to love.

I look upon thine eyes of light,
And feel that all besides is night ;
I press that snowy hand in mine,
And but condemn my art divine.
Oh Viviana ! I am lost ;
A life's renown thy smile hath cost.
A stone no ages can remove
Will be my monument of love ;
A nation's wail shall mourn my fate,
My country will be desolate :

Heav'n has no pardon left for me,
Condemn'd—undone—destroy'd—by thee!
Thy tears subdue my soul, thy sighs
Erase all other memories.
I have no being but in thee;
 My thirst for knowledge is forgot,
And life immortal would but be
 A load of care, where thou wert not.

Wouldst thou but turn away those eyes
I might be saved—I might be wise.
I might recal my reason still
But for that tongue's melodious thrill!
Oh! wherefore was my soul replete
 With wisdom, knowledge, sense, and power,
Thus to lie prostrate at thy feet,
 And lose them all in one weak hour!
But no—I argue not—'tis past—
 Thus to be thine, belov'd by thee,
I seek but this, even to the last,
 For all besides is vain to me.
I gaze upon thy radiant brow,
And do not ask a future now.

Thou hast the secret! speak not yet!
 Soon shall I gaze myself to stone,
Soon shall I all but thee forget,
 And perish to be thine alone.
Ages on ages shall decline,
But Myrdhyn shall be ever thine!



CHAPTER III.

TOMB OF BÉRANGÈRE—WIVES OF CŒUR DE LION—TOMBS—ABBÉY
CHURCHES—CHÂTEAU OF LE MANS—DE CRAON—THE SPECTRE
OF LE MANS—THE VENDÉEANS—MADAME DE LA ROCHE-JAQUELIN
—A WOMAN'S PERILS—DISASTERS OF THE VENDÉEANS—HENRI
—CHOUANS.

HOWEVER interesting the exterior of the Cathedral of St. Julien may be, the interior entirely corresponds with it. The windows of painted glass are of the very first order, and of surpassing beauty, nearly entire, and attributed to Cimabue. The double range in the choir, seen through the *grille*, or from the exterior aisle—for there are two on each side—present a magnificent *coup d'œil*. The architecture is of different periods; specimens may be observed belonging to the 12th century and reaching to the 17th; but some of the finest is that of the Norman era; the zigzags of the portals, and the

billets, rose mouldings, &c., being of peculiar delicacy and boldness. There is a great deal of ornament composed of those extravagant forms of animals which, at a distance, are confounded with the foliage to which they are attached, but which, viewed nearly, are mysteriously extraordinary. The circular arch reigns throughout, but many in *ogive* also occur in different parts. The arcades and galleries of the choir are of the utmost delicacy and elegance of form; but the chief attraction is the tomb of the widow of Richard Cœur de Lion, placed in one of the wings of the cross. The Lady Chapel is undergoing repair, and is being restored in the very best style. The new screen is beautiful, and the figures of the Virgin and Child in very good taste, as are all the ornaments, which exactly follow the fine originals. The exterior repairs are carried on with equal skill; and this precious monument will soon be in perfect order.

As I looked at the pure, dignified, and commanding outline of the face of Bérangère, she appeared to me to have been a fitting wife for the hero whose effigy had inspired me with so much admiration when I visited it a few years since, at Fontevraud. Her nose is slightly aquiline, her upper lip short and gracefully curved, her chin beautifully rounded, as are her cheeks; her eyebrows are clearly marked, and her eye full though not large; but, even in stone, it has a tender, soft

expression, extremely pleasing, and there is a sadness about the mouth which answers well to the tenderness of the eye. The forehead is of just proportion, and shaded by a frill which passes across, over which an ample veil is drawn: the whole confined by a diadem, the only part of the statue rather indistinct. Round her fine majestic throat is a band, to which a large ornament is attached, which rests on her chest; her head reclines on an embroidered pillow; her drapery falls over her figure and round her clasped hands in graceful folds, and the dog and lion at her feet complete the whole of this charming statue, which is of workmanship equal to that of the exquisite *four* in the little vault at Fontevraud.*

Bérangère was daughter of Sancho VI., king of Navarre—not, as some historians say, a princess of Castile or Arragon. After Richard's death, Philip-Augustus confirmed to her the dominion of Maine, in exchange for part of Normandy, which had been settled on her as her dower. She lived for more than twenty years in the town of Le Mans, where her memory was long preserved as *La Bonne Reine Bérangère*. She founded the monastery of Epau, near Le Mans, where the mausoleum was erected which now adorns the Cathedral of St. Julien.

* See a description of the statues of Cœur de Lion, Henry and Elinor, and Isabella of Angoulême, in "A Summer amongst the Bocages and the Vines."

Two houses are pointed out in the Grande Rue, said to have formed part of her palace; and the singularity of the ornaments which can be traced amidst their architecture, makes it probable that the tradition is not incorrect.

The abbey of Epau formerly stood about half a league from Le Mans, on the banks of the river Huisne, in the midst of a fertile plain; the widow of Richard founded it, in 1230, for Bernardins of the order of Citeaux.

The inhabitants of Le Mans destroyed the monastery, after the battle of Poitiers, in 1365, fearing that the English would take possession of it and render it a place of defence; and it was reconstructed early in the fifteenth century. The church alone remains, which, after the Revolution, was desecrated, as has been related, and the tomb of the foundress treated so unceremoniously.

There seems a question, which has not yet been fully resolved, as to the identity of the wives of Richard; by some authors a certain Rothilde, otherwise called Bérangère of Arragon, is described as his queen; who, "owing to some misunderstanding, caused a part of the city of Limoges to be destroyed, and salt strewn amongst the ruins; three days after which she died, and was buried under the belfry of the abbey of St. Augustine, in 1189 or 1190. Her mausoleum and statue were afterwards placed there."

This could scarcely be *our* Béragère of Navarre, since mention is made of her in public acts as late as 1234. In the annals of Aquitaine, by Bouchet, it is set forth, that, “in 1160, Henry, Duke of Aquitaine, and Raimond, Count of Barcelona, being at Blaye, on the Gironde, made and swore an alliance, by which Richard, surnamed Cœur de Lion, second son of the said Henry, was to marry the daughter of the said Raimond, when she should be old enough, and Henry promised to give, on the occasion of the said marriage, the duchy of Aquitaine to his son. This Raimond was rich and powerful, being Count of Barcelona in his own right, and King of Arragon in right of his wife.” The Princess Alix of France—about whose detention from him, Richard afterwards quarrelled with his father—never became his wife; but whether it is she who is meant by the queen buried at Limoges, in 1190, does not appear.

That he married Béragère in 1191, in the island of Cyprus, seems an ascertained fact; and that she died at Le Mans appears also certain; but whether Richard really had two wedded wives it is difficult to determine.

On the Monday of Pentecost, the Abbey of Epau was for centuries the scene of a grand festival, in honour of the patron saint, and the ceremony was continued, to a late period, of passing the day there in gaiety and amusement. All the

families of the neighbourhood sought the spot on foot, and every kind of country entertainment was resorted to. Although the object is now changed, an expedition to the remains of the Abbey of Epau is still a favourite one with the inhabitants of Le Mans; it is a kind of *Longchamps*, where all the fashion and gaiety of the town is displayed.

The only tombs, besides that of Bérangère, remaining in the cathedral of Le Mans, are those in white marble, of Charles of Anjou, Count of Maine and King of Jerusalem and Sicily, who died in 1472. Opposite this, is a finely-sculptured tomb, worthy of the school of Jean Goujon, of Langey du Bellay; the carving of the fruits and flowers which adorn it is attributed to Germain Pilon. There is some good carving, also, in a neighbouring chapel, by Labarre, done in 1610; but little else of this kind remarkable in the church; all the other tombs of countesses, dukes, and princes, having long since disappeared. However, Bérangère, perhaps, appears to the greater advantage, reigning, as she does, in solitary grandeur in this magnificent retreat.

The abbey churches of La Couture and Du Pré, are fine specimens of early architecture. In the chapel of the former, an inscription was once to be found on the walls, to the memory of a certain innkeeper and postilion, who, wishing that his name should be handed down to posterity, had set forth the fact of his having conducted the carriages

of four kings of France, and after passing sixty-four years as a married man, died in 1509 : he adds a prayer to this important record, that Heaven would provide a second husband for his widow, whose age appears to have reached not less than *sixteen lustres*. The subterranean church of La Couture is very remarkable, and is, no doubt, of Roman construction ; the capitals of the pillars are extremely curious, and its height and dryness are peculiar. The famous warrior, Hélié de la Flèche, so often named in the wars of the eleventh century, was here buried ; and here, it is said, was deposited the body of the blessed St. Bertrand. It is a very grand and interesting church in all its parts, and preserves some curious memorials of Roman and early Norman architecture.

The abbey church of Du Pré is equally curious, and its circular arches, strange capitals, niches and ornaments, prove its extraordinary antiquity.

There are a great many houses still existing in the oldest part of Le Mans which retain part of their original sculpture, and are of great antiquity, though it is not likely that they reach so far back as the time of Béragère, or La Reine Blanche, as she is traditionally called—a designation always given to the widowed queens of France.

The house in the Grande Rue—one of the most dilapidated streets in the town—said to have formed part of her palace, is now divided into two poulterers'

shops ; and when we visited it, the chamber called that of the widow of Cœur de Lion, was occupied by seven women, not employed in weaving tapestry or stringing pearls, but in plucking fowls. The chimney-piece is curious, adorned with two fine medallions of male heads, in high relief, very boldly executed. The outside of the house has some curious carving of eagles with expanded wings, strange monkey-shaped figures, lions *couchant*, crosslets and scrolls ; but the façade is so much destroyed, that it is difficult to connect any of these ornaments. The crosslets were the arms of Jerusalem, of which the counts of Anjou called themselves kings ; but to what period all these sculptures belong it is difficult to say.

The Grande Rue is full of these remains ; in the Rue des Chanoines, some circular-arched windows, ornamented with roses, stars, and *toothed* carving, indicate that here once stood the church founded by St. Aldric, in the ninth century ; and some pieces of wall and brick still prove its original Roman construction.

In the Place St. Michel, a stone house of ancient date is shown as having been inhabited by Scarron ; and in almost every street of the old town, some curious bits, worthy of an artist's attention, may be found ; but the search after them is somewhat fatiguing, and involves a visit to not the most agreeable part of the pretty city : all of which is interesting, whether new or old.

Of the once famous Château of Le Mans, erected long before the time of William the Conqueror, who destroyed it in part, nothing now remains but the Pans de Gorron, and a few *tourelles*. Yet it was, in the turbulent times when such fortresses were required, a place of enormous strength; and its two forts, one called Mont Barbet, and one Motte Barbet, defied many an attack.

It appears that the Manceaux were impatient of the yoke of the *conquering hero*, who endeavoured to make all the territory his own which approached his domains; and three times they gave him the trouble of besieging their town; he, at length, having raised fortifications sufficient to intimidate them, placed in command in the château a female, whose warlike attainments had rendered her famous even in those days of prowess. She was an English woman by birth, the widow of a Norman knight, and called Orbrindelle. The fort in which she took up her head quarters, and from whence she sent forth the terror of her power, was called after her; but, by corruption, was afterwards named Ribaudelle.

This castle was destroyed by royal order in 1617, and at its demolition several Roman monuments and inscriptions were found on the walls and beneath the foundations.

King John of France was born in the Château of Le Mans, and several monarchs made it their

temporary abode. The Black Prince sojourned within its walls till Duguesclin, the great captain, disturbed his repose. The unfortunate Charles VI., whom fate persecuted to the ruin of France, was at Le Mans when that fearful event occurred to him, which decided his future destiny. From the alleys of a great forest, now no longer existing, issued forth that mysterious vision which no sage has yet entirely explained. It is impossible to be at Le Mans, without recollecting the curious story connected with the poor young king, though the town is too light and cheerful-looking at the present day, to allow of its being a fitting scene either for so gloomy a legend, or for the sad events which modern days brought forth within its precincts.

The circumstances which caused the madness of the son of Charles the Wise, may not, perhaps, be immediately present to the reader's mind: they were as follows :—

Pierre de Craon, lord of Sablé and Ferté Bernard, an intriguing man, who held a high place in the consideration of Mary of Brittany, the regent of Anjou and Maine in the absence of her husband, who was prosecuting his designs against Naples and Sicily, had proved himself a faithless treasurer of large sums of money confided to him by his mistress; which sums had been wrung from the two provinces of Maine and Anjou. De Craon had dissipated this money in extravagance, instead

of supplying the army of Prince Louis, who died in consequence of disappointed hope and his unsuccessful struggles. The traitor made his appearance in Paris without fear; for he was protected by the powerful duke of Orleans, brother of the king.

Shortly afterwards, however, having had a dispute with the Constable, Olivier de Clisson, he laid wait for him, accompanied by a set of wretches in his pay, and fell upon the great captain unawares, wounding him in the head, and leaving him for dead. After this cowardly exploit, De Craon fled, and threw himself under the protection of the Duke of Brittany, who, although not his accomplice, was weak enough to take his part.

Pierre de Craon was condemned for contumacy; several of his people were punished with death, in particular a poor curate of Chartres, who was entirely innocent: his dwelling was razed to the ground, and its site given to a neighbouring church for a cemetery: and the Duke of Brittany was summoned by King Charles to deliver up the craven knight to justice.

This command, however, was treated with contempt, and the king accordingly put himself at the head of his troops, and set forth to attack the duke: it was at Le Mans that he arrived with his army.

Charles was greatly excited, and his nerves appear to have been agitated at this time, owing

to various causes. The weather was intensely hot, and the sun struck full upon him as he rode in advance of his army, surrounded by his guard of honour. He entered the Forest of Le Mans, and was proceeding down one of its glades, when suddenly a gigantic black figure, wild, haggard, and with hair floating in dishevelled masses over his face, darted suddenly from a deep recess, and, seizing the bridle of the king's horse, cried out, in a sepulchral voice, "Hold, king!—whither ride you?—go no further!—you are betrayed!" and instantly disappeared amidst the gloomy shades of the wood, before any one had time to lay hands on him.

Charles did not turn back, but continued his way in silence; he emerged from the forest on to a wide sandy plain, where the heat was almost intolerable, and where there was nothing to shelter him from the burning rays. A page was riding near him, who, overcome with fatigue, slept in his saddle, and let the lance he held fall violently on the helmet of one of his companions. The sharp sound this occasioned roused the king from his gloomy reverie: he started in sudden terror; his brain was confused and heated; he imagined that the accomplishment of the spectre's denunciation was at hand, and, losing his senses altogether, he drew his sword, and, with a wild cry, rushed forward, hewing down all before him, and galloping

distractedly across the plain, till, exhausted by fatigue and excitement, he fell from his horse in a swoon.

He was instantly surrounded by his people, raised from the ground, and conveyed with all care to Le Mans, where he remained till he was thought sufficiently recovered to be removed to Paris.

The storm about to fall on the head of the Duke of Brittany was thus turned aside, and the troops who had received orders to attack him were withdrawn. Whether this was a scene got up by the Duke of Brittany, in order to work on the diseased mind of the unfortunate monarch, or was merely the effect of an accidental meeting with a maniac, or whether the king's uncles, who disapproved of his just indignation at De Craon's conduct, had arranged the whole, it is impossible to say: but poor Charles was surrounded by traitors, foreign and domestic, and evidently had no good physician at hand, whose timely skill might have saved years of misery and bloodshed to France.

Throughout the deadly wars of the League, and the contentions between Catholic and Protestant, which desolated France, Le Mans and the whole of the department of Maine took a prominent part, and its streets, houses, churches, and villages were burnt and destroyed over and over again. The last stand of the unfortunate Vendéeans was at Le Mans. "Sad and fearful is the story" of the

fight there, as it is told by Madame de la Roche-Jaquelin, whose pictures draw tears from every eye, and whose narrative, read at Le Mans, is melancholy indeed.

After dreadful fatigues and varying fortune, during which the devoted town was taken and retaken several times, the harassed Vendéens, more remarkable for their valour than their prudence, remained in possession of the town on the night of the 10th of December, 1793, and gave themselves up to the repose which they so much needed, but without arranging any means of security, though a vigilant enemy was on the watch to take advantage of their state. They abandoned themselves, with characteristic superstition, to the care of Heaven alone ; placing no sentinels, no out-posts, no guard whatever : and, although the next day the chiefs visited the town and its issues, no precaution was taken against the possibility of an attack,—no measures to secure a retreat, nor council held as to whither their course should be directed in case of such a necessity. The time was consumed in disputes, as to whether the wearied Vendéean army should pursue its transient success, and go on to Paris, or yield to the desire of the generality of the soldiers, and return to their beloved home, by crossing the Loire, which so many regretted ever to have passed. It appears that there were from sixty to seventy thousand

persons in Le Mans, of the royalist party ; including women, children, and servants, with baggage and money to a large amount.

The republican army, commanded by Marceau and Westermann, surprised the town at night. In spite of the active bravery of La Roche Jaquelin, and the energy he displayed when the danger was so apparent, a fearful slaughter ensued. Street by street, and square by square, the Vendéans disputed every inch of ground, till the corpses of the slain lay in heaps in the narrow ways ; every house was a fortress,—every lane a pass desperately defended. The intrepid young leader had two horses killed under him, and was obliged to absent himself a moment to seek for others. No sooner did his people lose sight of him than a panic took possession of them ; they thought all lost,—became confused and disordered. Many of them, waked from sleep, or from a state of inebriety, in which the Britons are too apt to indulge, horrified at the shrieks of their women, stunned by the sound of the cannon, which roared through the dark streets, and startled at the glare of artillery suddenly blazing around them,—entirely lost all presence of mind, and fled in every direction ; killing and wounding friends and foes in their precipitous retreat. Horses, waggons, and dead bodies impeded their flight, and Le Mans was one scene of carnage and terror. Their

leaders stood their ground, and kept the great square of Le Mans for more than four hours, performing prodigies of valour. But the republicans at last were victors : and horribly did they pursue their advantage ; sparing neither age nor sex, and exulting in the most atrocious cruelties. The peasants of Le Mans and its environs, taking part with the stronger side, pursued the vanquished with disgraceful energy, and murdered the unfortunate Vendéans in the woods and fields, and in every retreat where those devoted people sought shelter and safety.

The state of the unfortunate women, whose husbands, sons, and fathers were being slaughtered with every volley which rung in their ears, is horrible to imagine. Madame de la Roche-Jaquelin thus describes her own position in moving language :

“From the beginning, we foresaw the result of the struggle. I was lodged at the house of a lady who was very rich, very refined, but a great republican. She had a large family, whom she tenderly loved, and whom she carefully attended. I resolved to confide my daughter to her, as one of her relations had already taken charge of little Jagault. I entreated her to protect her,—to bring her up as a mere peasant only,—to instil into her mind sentiments of honour and virtue. I said that, should she be destined to resume the position

in which she was born, I should thank Heaven for its mercy; but I resigned myself to all, provided she was virtuously brought up. She assured me that, if she took my child, she would educate her with her own. I used all the arguments a mother could in such circumstances, and was interrupted by the cry that announced retreat. She quitted me instantly; and I, losing at once all hope, but trusting at least to save my daughter's life, placed her secretly in the bed of the mistress of the family, certain that she could not have the cruelty to abandon the innocent little creature. I then descended the stairs: I was placed on horseback; the gate was opened; I saw the square filled with a flying, pressing crowd, and in an instant I was separated from every one I knew. I perceived M. Stofflet, who was carrying the colours: I took advantage of his presence to try to find the road; I followed him across the square, which I supposed was the way; I kept close to the houses; and at length reached the street which led in the direction I sought, towards the road of Laval. But I found it impossible to advance; the concourse was too great, — it was stifling: carts, waggons, cannon, were overturned; bullocks lay struggling on the ground, unable to rise, and striking out at all who approached them. The cries of persons trodden underfoot echoed everywhere. I was fainting with hunger and terror: I could scarcely see; for day-

light was nearly closed. At the corner of a street I perceived two horses tied to a stake, and they completely barred my passage ; the crowd pressed them against me ; and I was squeezed between them and the wall : I screamed to the soldiers to take and ride off with them ; but my voice was not heard or attended to. A young man on horseback passed by me, with a mild and sad countenance : I cried out to him, catching his hand, ' Oh ! sir, have pity on a poor woman, near her confinement, and perishing with want and fatigue : I can go no further.' The stranger burst into tears, and replied : ' I am a woman, too : we shall perish together ; for nothing can penetrate into yonder street.' We both remained expecting our fate.

" In the meantime, the faithful Bontemps, servant of M. de Lescure, not seeing my daughter, sought for her everywhere,—found her at length, and carried her off in his arms. He followed me, perceived me in the crowd, and called out, ' I have saved my master's child !' I hung down my head, and resigned myself to the worst. In a moment after I saw another of my servants : I called to him ; he caught my horse by the bridle ; and, cutting his way with his sabre, we entered the street. With incredible trouble, we reached a little bridge in the faubourg, on the road to Laval : a cannon was overturned upon it, and

stopped up the way : at length we got by, and I found myself in the road ; where I paused, with many others. Some officers were there, trying to rally their soldiers ; but all their efforts were useless.

“ The republicans, hearing a noise where we were, turned their cannon upon us from the height of the houses. A bullet whizzed past my head : a moment afterwards a fresh discharge startled me ; and, involuntarily, I bent myself low upon my horse. An officer near reproached me bitterly for my cowardice. ‘ Alas ! ’ replied I, ‘ it is excusable in a wretched woman to crouch down when a whole army has taken to flight ! ’ In fact, the firing continued so violently that all of our people who had paused recommenced flying for their lives. Had it been daylight, perhaps they might have been recalled.

“ A few leagues from Le Mans, I beheld the arrival of my father. He and Henri had been for a long time vainly endeavouring to reanimate the soldiers. Henri hurried towards me, exclaiming, ‘ You are saved ! ’—‘ I thought you were lost,’ cried I, ‘ since we are beaten.’ He wrung my hand, saying, ‘ I would I were dead ! ’

“ About twelve leagues from Le Mans, I stopped in a village : a great part of the army had also halted there. There was scarcely any one in the cottages : the road was covered with poor wretches,

who, fainting with fatigue, were sleeping in the mud, without heeding the pelting rain. The rout of Le Mans cost the lives of fifteen thousand persons. The greatest part were not killed in the battle; many were crushed to death in the streets of Le Mans; others, wounded and sick, remained in the houses, and were massacred. They died in the ditches and the fields: a great number fled on the road to Alençon, were there taken, and conducted to the scaffold.

* * * *

“Such was the deplorable defeat of Le Mans, where the Vendéean army received a mortal blow: it was an inevitable fatality. The day that they quitted the left bank of the Loire, with a nation of women, children, and old people, to seek an asylum in a country unknown, without being aware what route they should take, at the beginning of winter, it was easy to foretel that we should conclude by this terrible catastrophe. The greatest glory that our generals and soldiers can claim is that they retarded its accomplishment so long.

“The unfortunate and intrepid Henri did not abandon his cause till not a hope was left; and even at the last he lingered at Le Mans, and fought desperately in the Place de l'Eperon, establishing a battery of cannon which long kept the enemy at bay. But all was unavailing, and he yielded to necessity. He arrived at Laval at the close of day,

spent and exhausted, and entered a house where he entreated to be allowed to rest. He was warned that he might run the risk of being surprised by Westermann,—‘My greatest want,’ said he, ‘is not to live, but to sleep.’”

The Vendéens had left behind them so much gold and merchandize, so much furniture, and such precious possessions, that, far from these sad events being a cause of ruin to the inhabitants of Le Mans, they were the means of establishing prosperity in the town in many instances, and its commercial influence increased very sensibly from that period. It is at this moment a town which appears in a very flourishing state, and is on the whole one of the most agreeable and interesting in this part of France.

The misfortunes and troubles which the ill-fated army of royalists experienced, did not prevent their renewal a few years after, when the sad events of the wars of the Chouans brought back all the miseries which the desolated country was but little able to contend with.

However high-sounding the supposed motives might be which re-illumed the war, it is now generally acknowledged that only a few enthusiastic men acted from a sense of honour and patriotism: the greatest part being influenced by less worthy ideas. Had it not been so, the excesses committed by the Chouans would never

have disgraced the annals of warfare : wretches without religion, morality, or feeling, mere brigands and marauders, under the sacred banner of patriotism, ravaged the country, burning, torturing, and destroying, pillaging, and committing every crime, dignified meantime by the appellation of heroes, which one or two amongst them might have deserved if they had fought in better company, and been better directed. It is strange that any one, particularly at the present day, can be found to magnify into heroism the misguided efforts of a set of turbulent school-boys, who, again, at a later period, were made the tools of villains for their own purposes of plunder ; yet, very recently, works have appeared in which the *petite Chouannerie* is exalted into a praiseworthy community. Pity for the sacrificed children who were betrayed, and the bereaved mothers who wept over the disobedience of their sons, is all that belongs to those concerned in the useless revolt which caused ruin to so many.

“The intention of the Chouans in taking arms,” says M. de Scépeaux, in his letters on the Chouans of Bas-Maine, “was to *defend and preserve*, not to *attack and destroy* ; and, like the soldiers of Pelayo, who kept the rocks of Asturias as a last stronghold against their besiegers, the Chouans made their Bocages a last asylum for the French monarchy.” This is a fine *phrase*, but the facts

are very far removed from this assertion. The Chouans were a terror and a scourge to their fellow-citizens: farms burnt, unoffending citizens robbed and murdered, all their possessions seized on and appropriated, stabbing in the dark, and cowardly cruelties of all kinds characterized these "honourable men," who were *guerillas* and nothing more. They took names such as in former times distinguished the bands of brigands who were the terror of the middle ages, and their acts rendered the similitude more striking. Some of these chiefs signed themselves, Joli-cœur, Sans-peur, Monte-à-l'assaut, Bataillon, &c.

It was a fearful time, and violence and cruelty reigned triumphant whichever party took the field. The province of Le Maine suffered severely in the struggle. Le Mans was again the scene of contention, and the streets of the town the theatre of slaughter.

Who, to look at the quiet, tranquil town now, would think how much it has suffered! and who but must feel indignant at the pretended patriot who is not grateful to the existing government, under whose wise sway the cities of France are recovering their beauty and importance after long years of torture and desolation!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUSEUM OF LE MANS—VENUS—MUMMY—GEOFFREY LE BEL—
HIS COSTUME—MATILDA—SCARRON—HÉLIE DE LA FLÈCHE—
RUFUS—THE WHITE KNIGHT.

THE Museum of Le Mans is in the Hôtel de la Prefecture, and as we heard that the famous enamel of Geoffrey Plantagenet, formerly on his tomb in the cathedral, was preserved there, we hastened to behold so interesting a remain of early art. A remarkably obtuse female was the exhibitor on the occasion, and, on my asking her to point out the treasure, she took me to a collection of Roman coins and medals, assuring me they were very old and very curious. It was impossible not to agree with her, and to regard these coins with interest, particularly as they were all found in the immediate neighbourhood of Le Mans; however, as a glance at them was sufficient, we proceeded to examine all the cases, hoping to discover the object of our search.

We were arrested before a case filled with objects of art found principally at the ruins of Alonnes, near Le Mans, which commune is a perfect emporium of Roman curiosities, where no labourer directs his plough across a field, or digs a foot deep in his garden, without finding statues, pillars, baths, medals, &c., in heaps. All these things are of fine workmanship, and thence, lately, two little wonders have been rescued from oblivion, which are really gems. One is a small female bust of white marble, perfect, and of singular grace; the other the entire figure, having only one arm wanting, of a Venus twenty-one inches high, and of exquisite proportion; she sits on the trunk of a tree; her beauty is incomparable, and she must owe her birth to an artist of very superior genius.

As if to prove how worthless is that beauty which attracts and rivets the attention, even in stone, close by is one of the finest and most perfectly-preserved female mummies I ever beheld,—hideous in its uninjured state, grinning fearfully with its rows of fine ivory teeth a little broken, glaring with its still prominent eyes, and appalling with its blackened skin drawn over the high cheek-bones. Why might not this carefully-attended and richly-adorned queen be the beautiful and fatal “serpent of old Nile”—the fascinating Cleopatra herself?

The features are fine and delicate in spite of the

horrible hue of the skin, and though it revolts the mind at first, one can even fancy that mass of horror might, in life, have been beautiful. This valuable specimen was brought from Egypt by M. Edouard de Montulé, a zealous and enterprising young traveller, too early snatched from science and the world at the age of thirty-six.

A gentleman, drawing in the museum, who had arrived after us, hearing our questions to our guide, very politely stepped forward and offered to show us the objects of interest which he saw we might otherwise miss. He led us at once to the enamel we so much desired to see, and we had ample time to contemplate one of the most remarkable curiosities of art which perhaps exists anywhere.

Geoffrey le Bel, surnamed Plantagenet, the second husband of the haughty Empress Matilda, who considered her dignity compromised in being obliged to marry a simple Count of Anjou, was, nevertheless, the handsomest man of his day, and apparently one of the most distinguished *dandies*. Jean, the monk of Marmontier, in his description of the fêtes given by the count at Rouen, speaks of the splendid habiliments of this prince—of his *Spanish barb*, his helmet, his buckler, his lance of *Poitou steel*, and his celebrated sword taken from the treasury of his father, and renowned as the work of “the great *Galannus*, the most expert of

armourers.” Even in this very guise does Geoffrey appear.

He holds the sword, considered as magical, unsheathed in his right hand ; his shield or target covers his shoulders, and descends in a point to his feet. It is charged azure, with four rampant golden leopards ; only the half of the shield appears, consequently all its blazonry is not visible. He wears a sort of Phrygian cap ornamented with a golden leopard ; he has a dalmatic robe, and a capacious mantle edged with ermine, his scarf and waistband are of the same form, and all are of rich colours—red, green, and purple—such as appear in stained glass. It is painted with great detail, and the features are very distinct ; they convey very little idea of beauty, but have sufficient character to indicate likeness. The copy, which Stothard made with great care, is extremely correct, much more so than the drawing he gave of Bérangère, whose beauty he entirely failed to represent : none but an accomplished artist, indeed, could do so, and the indefatigable antiquarian, who lost his life in his zeal for his pursuit, was more accustomed to the quaint forms exhibited on windows and brasses. The inscription formerly to be read beneath the effigy of Geoffrey, on the tomb, was as follows :—

“ Thy sword, oh ! Prince, has delivered our country from the hordes of brigands who infested

it, and given to the Church entire security under the shadow of peace.”

There is something of melancholy and quiet about this portrait, which accord with the character given of the prince by historians, who represent him mild and good, generous, brave, and magnanimous ; an encourager of the arts and poetry, and a lover of order ; but forced into wars by the haughty temper of his wife, and obliged to distress his subjects for supplies in consequence. His marriage with Matilda took place in 1127, with great pomp, at Le Mans, in the palace of the Counts of Anjou ; and the solemnities attending it lasted for three weeks. All the vassals of Henry I. of England, father of the bride, and of Foulques, father of Geoffrey, were summoned to attend under pain of being considered enemies of the public good. As Henry delayed putting his son-in-law in possession of Normandy, as had been agreed on, Matilda excited her husband to go to war with him, and a series of conflicts ensued which entailed much misery on the country.

Geoffrey le Bel died in 1151, of pleurisy, in consequence of bathing imprudently in the Loire. His body was brought to Le Mans and buried in the cathedral, and his son, the illustrious Henry II. of England, succeeded him ; a prince superior to his time, but destined to continued vexations from his family and his friends. The proud Matilda, too,

—so like the haughty heiress of Aquitaine,—need not have murmured at the lot which made her mother and grandmother of such kings as Henry and Cœur de Lion.

The pictures in the museum of Le Mans possess no sort of merit: there is a series of paintings coarsely done from the “Roman Comique” of Scarron, representing the principal scenes in his strange work; but they have no other value than that of having been painted at the period when he was popular, and being placed there in consequence of his having resided at Le Mans, though I believe it was not the place of his birth. It was here, at all events, that his imprudence caused his own misfortune; for in the exuberance of his gaiety, he resolved, on occasion of a fête, which annually takes place on the route of Pontlieue, to amuse himself and the Manceaux, by a childish exhibition of himself *as a bird*. To this end, he actually smeared himself with honey, and then having rolled in feathers, and assumed as much as possible the plumed character he wished to represent, he sallied forth and joined the procession astonishing all beholders; but he had not reckoned on the effect his appearance would produce on the boys of the parish, ever ready for mischief. Delighted at such an opportunity, they pursued the unfortunate wit without mercy, pelting and chasing him. His fear of being recognised, and his anxiety to escape them,

caused him to fly for refuge, heated as he was with his extraordinary exertions, under an arch of the old bridge, where he was exposed to a severe draught. The cold struck to his limbs, and the consequence was that he became paralysed for the rest of his life, an affliction which he names at the beginning of his famous romance.

The commune of Alonnes, from whence so many antique treasures are derived, is about a league from Le Mans, and is looked upon with much superstitious veneration by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. Not only are fine Roman remains discovered there, but, by the rude pottery continually turned up, it appears to have been a considerable city of the Gauls; for the singular forms exhibited on their vases and stones are altogether different from those of a more refined people. To neither of these nations, however, was Alonnes supposed to belong, but to one more powerful and mysterious still: no other than the fairies, who may, even now, on moonlight nights, be seen hovering round their *Tour aux fées*, of which a few stones alone remain. A subterranean way (aqueduct) is supposed to have communicated with the ancient castle; and no doubt its recesses are the scene of many a midnight revel carried on by those unseen visitants of ruins.

Numerous baths of Roman construction have been found, and more yet remains to be discovered. About

fifty years since, some workmen making excavations observed the opening of a covered way which they followed for some distance, expecting to find treasure. They had not gone far, when they were surprised by suddenly entering vast chambers, covered with the remains of columns, vases, and ornamental architecture: instead of continuing their search, they were seized with a panic, and fled from the spot without attempting to penetrate further. If more valorous seekers were to prosecute the adventure, at the spot where they left it, no doubt very interesting discoveries might be made, which would repay the attempt.

One of the chief heroes of Le Mans and Maine, and he who is the most continually spoken of in its history, is Hélié de la Flèche. He was one of the most generous and valiant knights of his time, and to him his supine and cowardly cousin, Hugues, tired of the frequent struggles which he found it necessary to sustain in order to keep in possession of his rights, resigned the dominion of Maine, much to the delight of the Manceaux, who received their young lord with open arms. Hélié showed himself a friend to his new people, and entered into an alliance with Geoffrey IV. Count of Anjou. After which, being ready to set out for the crusades, according to the fashion of the times, and finding that Robert of Normandy had already departed, he went to Rouen, to William Rufus, in

the hope of obtaining his acknowledgment of his rights to the county of Maine. He, however, failed in this expectation, and put himself in array to contend with this formidable adversary, in whose alliance was a very unpleasant and dangerous neighbour, the perfidious Count of Belesme and Baron du Saosnois, Robert II., called Talvas, generally known as *Robert le Diable*. This treacherous prince laid a snare for Hélié, into which he fell, and he delivered him up to William Rufus.

Kept prisoner at Rouen, and fearing that the Count of Anjou would enter into an accommodation with William Rufus, which would compromise the interests of his patrimony of La Flèche, which he knew had long been coveted by those of Anjou, Hélié made up his mind to treat for his ransom, by which he consented to give up the province of Maine to the King of England, and to do him homage for his lordship of La Flèche, as his father had done before. He obtained his liberty at this price, and was brought before William, who ordered the chains with which he was bound to be removed, as Wace relates—

“ Dunc le fist li Reis amener
Et des *buies* le fist oster.”

He then offered to attach himself to William, as one of his most faithful officers; but this being declined, murmurs escaped him, which roused the king's anger, as the old chronicler has recounted.

“ Count H  lie’s steed he ordered forth,
With housings dight of regal worth ;
‘ Mount straight, sir knight, and go,’ he cried ;
‘ Wherever it may list you ride,
But guard you well another tide.
My prison shall be deep and strong
If you again my thrall should be,
And trust me ’twill be late and long
Ere, once my captive, you are free.
In future, Count, I bid you know
I am your ever-ready foe ;
Where’er you go, it shall not lack,
But William shall be on your back !’

I know not if Count H  lie found
Words to reply. He turned him round,
And little he delayed, I ween,
‘ To make their distance great between !’

As might be anticipated, H  lie was not content to sit down patiently with so bad a bargain as he had made. He had yielded his right in Le Maine, and by resisting he placed himself in the position of a rebel to his liege lord ; nevertheless, scarcely had William returned to England, thinking himself secure, than H  lie began to make a struggle to recover what he had lost. No sooner, however, did William hear of his proceeding than he hurried back from England, and in an incredibly short space of time was at Le Mans : he found his vassal more powerful than he expected, and much violence ensued. Obligated to return to England, not long after this his sudden death ensued. H  lie, aided by the Count of Angers, attacked and took posses-

sion of Le Mans, and besieged the castle: two Norman officers in command had, in the meantime, received orders from the new King of England to treat with Hélié; and when he presented himself before the walls, they requested him to clothe himself in his white tunic, which had gained him the surname of the White Knight. With this he complied; and on his re-appearance before them, they received him with smiles, saying,—

“ Sir White Knight, you may now rejoice to good purpose, for we have reached the term so long desired by you; and if you have a good sum of money for us, we will make a good bargain. If we chose to resist we have still arms, provisions, and valour; but the truth is, we want a legitimate master to whom we can dedicate our service. For which reason, noble warrior, knowing your merit, we elect and constitute you henceforth Count of Le Mans.”

Hélié, after this, took part against Robert and the Count of Mortain at the battle of Tinchebray, where he commanded an army composed of Bretons and Manceaux. He distinguished himself wherever he appeared in battle, and died in 1110, and was buried in the abbey church of La Couture, where his tomb was formerly seen. He was the hero of his age. Pious, loyal, and valiant, his device expressed his qualities:—“ No glory without honour, and no honour without glory.” He was active,

vigilant, and just, says one of his biographers, as great in his reverses as in his successes ; he added to the merit of a great captain the talents of a sound politician, and the enlightened mind of a statesman ; but his highest praise is that he merited and obtained the affection of his vassals.

His memory was long cherished in Le Mans, even till the events of the great Revolution swept away all records but that of the crimes then committed.



Les Pierres Couvertes.

CHAPTER V.

LUDE—SAUMUR REVISITED—THE GARDEN—LA PETITE VOISINE—
THE RETIRED MILITAIRE—LES PIERRES COUVERTES—LES PETITES
PIERRES—LOUDUN—URBAIN GRANDIER—RICHELIEU—THE NUNS
—THE VICTIM—THE FLY—THE MALLE POSTE—THE DISLODGED
SERPENTS.

LEAVING Le Mans, and all its recollections, we continued our way towards the Loire, which we proposed crossing at Saumur, not only with a pleasing memory of our former visit there, when the sight of Fontevraud and its treasured tombs of our English kings first delighted us, but because, with all my wish to leave nothing unnoticed in the

interesting towns of France, I had quitted Saumur without having made a *pilgrimage* to some of its most singular and important monuments. It was only on reading a passage in Michelet's History of France, when he alludes to the "*prodigious Dolmen*" of Saumur, that I found there was still something of interest which I had neglected. Doubtless this has often been the case in my wanderings; and, probably, there is scarcely a town where some new treasure may not be discovered by some fresh traveller, where there is so much to excite attention.

I determined, therefore, to pause at Saumur, to enjoy its beauties once more, and pass a day with its Druids.

Lude was in our way, where, on the banks of the Loire, stands a magnificent castle; now a private residence, kept up in great style, and surrounded with beautiful gardens, better attended to than any I ever saw in France, where the name of *Jardin Anglais* is, usually, another term for a wilderness. Lude belonged to a Breton nobleman, M. de Falt-röet, and now to his son, for the inhabitants were just deploring his recent death, and, what is sufficiently unusual in France, naming a man of rank with respect and affection. He appears to have been one of the most amiable and considerate of men, and to be sincerely lamented. The young woman from the inn, who was our guide there,

spoke of his death with great sorrow, and was eloquent in his commendation, as the friend of the people and the poor.

The castle is very extensive and in high preservation : we could not see the interior, which I am told is very interesting : rooms being named after Francis I. and Henry IV., who are both said to have visited here ; and the furniture of their time is preserved or introduced. The exterior walls are adorned with medallions of extraordinary size, in the style peculiar to Francis I., and the huge round towers are similarly decorated : much of the building between these towers is of more modern date, but all is in good keeping and handsome. Several fine willows dip their boughs into the river, which bathes one side—but what was the moat on all the others, is now filled up with flowering trees and shrubs, and the ramparts laid out in terraces, covered with a luxuriant growth of every kind of rare and graceful plant. There is a charming view from the gardens, and the abode altogether is delightful.

The country is rich and fertile, covered with fields of Indian corn, flax, and hemp ; here and there are large plantations of fir-trees ; the chestnut-trees we observed were very luxuriant, loaded with fruit ; the apples thickly clustered in the numerous orchards, and everything abundant and smiling.

We rejoiced at once more beholding the Loire at the spot where, on our former visit, we most

admired it. Saumur is, however, greatly increased and improved during the three years which had elapsed since we first made its acquaintance. New houses are built, old ones pulled down, and active measures taken to beautify and adorn the town. The same slovenliness struck us as before on the promenade by the river, where the idea of sweeping up fallen leaves, or cleaning steps, never seems to have occurred, and the theatre walls look as desolate and ill-conditioned as formerly. The baths, which attracted my admiration before, seated on an islet amidst flowering shrubs, had lost the brightness of their then newly-painted outside, and had rather a forlorn effect; the old Hôtel de Ville and its towers and turrets looked as venerable as ever, and the Loire showed much less sand and more of its crystal water. The magnificent Donjon towered majestically on its height, and all the caves of the chain of rocks beneath showed their mysterious openings as when they first excited my surprise.

We visited almost all our old friends—the venerable monuments of times gone by—in the town, and discovered several towers which the removal of houses have rendered evident. We were remarking a building of this kind, whose turrets could have been erected only by Foulques Nera himself, when we were invited into a garden opposite by the proprietors, who took an interest in our curiosity. This garden, and the family that owned it, were

quite *unique* in their way ; the master was a retired *militaire*, the mistress a smart, managing woman ; and their delight and treasure a little boy of about ten, and a tiny garden enclosed between two walls, with a pavilion at each end, and filled with shrubs and flowers exquisitely beautiful, and tended as garden never was tended since Eve herself spent all her time in restraining the growth of her garlands. Tea-scented roses, roses of all hues and perfumes, rare plants, seldom seen but in hot-houses, all fresh and flourishing, occupied every nook of this little retreat, the *délices*, as they assured us, of this couple, whose content and satisfaction at the perfection of their dwelling overflowed at every word. “ You see,” said the hostess, as she led us through the little alleys, and made us pause at the minute alcoves—“ nothing can be more complete ; we have a perfect little paradise of flowers, and a little world of our own ; we have no occasion to go out to be amused, for, let us throw open our *jalousies* in our *salon* at the corner of this tower, and we see all the world without being seen ; when we shut it we are in solitude, and what can we require beyond ? My little son,” she continued, pointing to the other object of her care, who was seated beside a pretty little girl, tuning a small instrument, “ occupies himself with his violin, and he can touch the guitar prettily, also ; he is now playing to a *petite voisine* who often comes to keep

him company : he has considerable parts, and is well advanced in his Latin. We let our large house to M. le Curé, and live in the small one at the other end of our garden ; it is large enough for us, and nothing can be so convenient."

While she continued to converse, setting forth the advantages of her position, the *bon garçon* of a husband, who seemed second in command, followed with assenting smiles. I asked if he smoked in his little summer-house sometimes, but saw that my question was *mal-à-propos*, for his wife replied quickly, that he had not that bad habit, and, indeed, would not endure smoking any more than herself. He looked somewhat sily as he remarked, that since he had left the army he had never *indulged* in it.

We returned to our inn laden with bouquets, forced upon us by these happy, hospitable people, whose content, and the beauty of their little garden, so like numerous others in charming Saumur, confirmed our notion of its being the most agreeable place in France to live at.

The evening was oppressively hot, and we walked on the fine bridge, hoping to meet a breeze. The shallow river was like glass, so transparent, that every pebble seemed clearly defined at the bottom. Sunset made the sky one sheet of ruby colour, and the stars, rising in great splendour, shone with dazzling brilliancy ; the deep purple of the glowing night which

succeeded was like sapphire, every building, every tower, every hill, was mirrored in the waters, and the spires of every church threw their delicate lines along the still expanse. The gigantic castle looked down from its height as if protecting all; and the few white motionless sails at a distance, pausing near the willowy islands, where not a leaf moved, made the whole like enchantment. I never beheld a more exquisite night, nor saw a more beautiful scene.

The next day was brilliant; but the stillness of the air had given place to a fresh wind, which made our long walk across the Roman arched bridge, towards the famous *Pierres Couvertes*, less fatiguing. Though the way to it is by nearly a league of hot dusty road, yet the surprise and pleasure of the sight on arriving at this extraordinary monument quite repays all toil.

In a woody dell, not far from the main road, stand these wonderful stones, in all their mysterious concealment, puzzling the mind and exciting the imagination with their rude forms and simple contrivances. Before we left England we had made an excursion to Stonehenge, that most gigantic of all Druidical remains, and had carried with us a perfect recollection of all its proportions. The temple of Saumur is not a quarter its height, but is *entirely covered* in, and apparently of *ruder* construction, there being no art whatever used to keep the stones together except that of placing them one

over the other. We measured the length and height in the best way we could, and found it to be eighteen yards long, from the entrance to the back, which is closed in by a broad flat stone, five yards and a-half in length within and eight yards without. The height is not more than three yards from the ground ; but it has evidently sunk in the earth considerably. The sides incline inwards, leaving the covering stones projecting like a cottage roof, and the great stone at the back has also lost its perpendicular ; nevertheless, there are none displaced of this chamber. It appears, by several broad slabs which lie scattered about, that there must have been more compartments of the temple : an outer court existed, and a narrower part at the entrance, the stones of which are still upright.

This treasure is preserved from injury by a palisade round the piece of ground on which it stands, in its little grove, and a wooden door shuts it in, which is in the custody of an old woman who keeps a school close by and receives the offerings of the curious. Her pupils, of tender age, pursue some of their studies in a small hall where she presides ; but their chief pursuit seems to be amusement, to judge by the laughter and general hilarity which prevailed, as they ran gambolling amongst the venerable shades, peeping slyly at the strangers, whose contemplations they were commanded not to interrupt.

From the *Grandes Pierres Couvertes*, we continued our way, through vines and fields, to the top of a neighbouring hill, which commanded a charming view of the town and castle, and fine country round. There, in the midst of heath and wild thyme and nodding harebells, at the extremity of a ploughed field, overhanging a deep rocky road, stands another temple of the Gauls. It is called *Les Petites Pierres Couvertes*, and is similar in construction to the large one, but not a quarter its size. Its position is most picturesque, and the landscape spread out before its rugged arch exquisite. It is covered in, and its walls are firm and close; though, from its exposed situation, one would expect that it must long ago have fallen. Remains of large stones lie around, partly covered with vegetation, and many, no doubt, are embedded in the earth. Perhaps the two temples communicated once on a time, and covered the whole space between; where probably waved a gigantic forest. The wind had risen violently as we sat, in the sun, beside the *Petites Pierres*, and our walk back to Saumur promised us a great deal of dust, for we saw it eddying in the valleys beneath, like wreaths of mist. We, however, contrived to avoid the high road, and found our way, by a very pleasant path, to the town, before the threatened storm arrived which night brought.

By a fine star-light evening of the following day,

which we had spent amongst the hills and in visiting the fortifications of the castle, we took our departure for Poitiers—the next great object of our interest.

We reached Loudun in the dark, consequently had no opportunity of judging of its appearance; but, as far as we could observe, there seemed little to please the eye. The place itself is no further interesting than as having been the scene of that frightful tragedy which disgraced the seventeenth century, and which, though a story often told, may not be familiar to every reader; at least, its particulars may not immediately recur to all who hear the name of Loudun. The revolution which destroyed so much, has left scarcely any traces of the famous convent of Ursulines, where the scenes took place which cast a disgraceful celebrity on its community.

The curé and canon of St. Peter of Loudun, was a young man, named Urbain Grandier, remarkable not only for his learning and accomplishments, but for his great beauty, and the grace of his manners, together with a certain air of the world, which was, perhaps, an unfortunate distinction for one in his position. His gallantry and elegance would have graced a Court, but his lot had cast him where such *agréments* were not only unnecessary, but misplaced. Urbain had, besides, been favoured by fortune, in having

obtained two benefices ; a circumstance witnessed with envy by several of the ecclesiastics, his contemporaries ; who felt themselves thrown constantly into the shade by his superiority in this as in other respects. The priests, his companions, were not inclined to be indulgent to any weakness shown by their young and admired rival ; the husbands of some of his fair parishioners looked on him with an evil eye, while the ladies themselves could see nothing to blame in his deportment, ever devoted and amiable as he was to them. All the learned men of the country sought his society ; all the well-meaning and generous spirits of the neighbourhood found answering virtues in Urbain Grandier, and he was not aware that he had an enemy in existence.

He had forgotten that he had once been so unfortunate as to offend a man who never forgave, and who, from being merely the prior of Coussay, had risen to a high rank in the church, and was now all-powerful, and able to take revenge for any petty injury long past, but carefully treasured, to be repaid with interest when occasion should serve.*

The Cardinal de Richelieu, from the height of his grandeur, suddenly condescended to remember

* A wretched and pointless satire had appeared under the title of *La Cordonnrière de Loudun*, in which the Cardinal figured : Père Joseph insinuated that Grandier was the author, and the supposed insult was readily credited.

his old acquaintance, the curé Grandier, and was only on the look-out for a moment at which to prove to him that nothing of what had once passed between them had escaped his recollection. A means was soon presented, and, without himself appearing too prominently in the affair, the cardinal arrived at his desired end.

It happened that some young and giddy pupils of the Convent of Ursulines, bent on a frolic, resolved to 'terrify the bigoted and ignorant nuns of the community, by personating ghosts and goblins, and they succeeded to their utmost wishes, having acted their parts to admiration; but they were far from dreaming of the fatal consequences of their success.

The disturbed nuns, worried and frightened from their propriety, went in a body to a certain curé, named Mignon, one of the most spiteful and envious of Grandier's rivals, and related to him the fact of their convent being disturbed by ghostly visitants, who left them no peace or rest. The thought instantly occurred to Mignon, that he might turn this accident to account at the expense of the handsome young priest whom he detested.

Instead of ghosts and spirits, he changed the mystery into witchcraft and *possession by the devil*, and contrived so artfully, that he induced many of the nuns to imagine themselves a prey to the evil one, and to assume all the appearance of

suffering from the influence of some occult power. His pupils became quite expert in tricks of demoniacal possession, falling into convulsions and trances, and going through all the absurdities occasionally practised at the present day, by the disciples of Mesmer. These foolish, rather than wicked, women, were led to believe that, by acting thus, they were advancing the interests of religion, and they allowed themselves to fall blindly into the scheme, devised for the purpose of ruining the devoted curé. A public exorcism took place, at which scenes of absurdity, difficult to be credited, took place, and when the possessed persons were questioned as to how they became a prey to the evil spirit, they declared that the devil had entered into them by means of a bouquet of roses, the perfume of which they had inhaled ; when asked by whom these flowers had been sent them, they replied that it was Urbain Grandier ! This was enough to seal his doom ; on the 3d of December, 1633, the Councillor Laubardemont arrived secretly at Loudun, caused the young curé to be arrested, as he was preparing to go to church, and had him carried off to the castle of Angers. The devils, supposed to possess the nuns, were severally questioned, *and replied*, they were Astroth, of the *order of* Seraphins, the head and front of all, Easas, Celcus, Acaos, Cedon, Asmodeus, *of the order of* Thrones, Alez, Zabulon, Nephtalim,

Cham, Uriel, Achas, of the order of Principalities ! In the following April he was brought back to Loudun, and consigned to the prison there. The farce of exorcism was now recommenced ; but the fatigue of sustaining the parts they had assumed, and perhaps a conviction of the fearful nature of the deceptions they had practised, caused some of the actors in this drama to rebel, and they actually made a public retractation of what they had before advanced.

It was, however, now too late ; no notice was taken of their denial of their former charges against the victim whose fate was agreed upon, and in August, 1634, a commission was duly appointed, at the head of which were Laubardemont and his satellites, who pronounced Urbain Grandier guilty, and convicted of the crime of magic. His sentence condemned him to be burned alive, but, resolved to carry vengeance to the utmost extent, he was made to undergo the torture, suffering pangs too horrible to think of. He was then conveyed to Poitiers, where he suffered at the stake, and by his unmerited fate left an indelible blot on the age in which such monstrous cruelty could be perpetrated, or such ignorant barbarity tolerated. He endured his torments with patience and resignation. While he was suffering, a large fly was observed to hover near his head. A monk, who was enjoying the spec-

tacle of his execution, and who had heard that Béelzébul, in Hebrew, signified *the God of the Flies*, cried out, much to the edification of all present, “Behold yonder, the devil, Beelzebub, flying round Grandier ready to carry off his soul to hell!” *

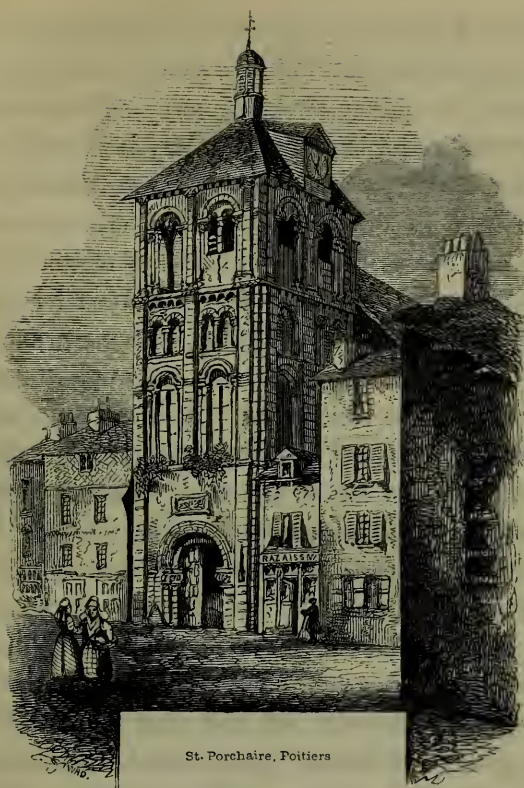
The unpleasant recollections raised by the neighbourhood of Loudun were dispelled as we hurried on to the next post, which was at Mirebeau, where we were not a little entertained at the primitive manner in which our *malle poste* delivered and received its despatches. The coach stopped in the middle of the night in the silent streets of Mirebeau, and the conductor, stationing himself beneath the window of a dwelling, called loudly to the sleepers within; no answer was returned, nor did he repeat his summons; but waited, with a patience peculiar to *conducteurs*, who do not care to hurry their horses, till a rattling on the wall announced the approach of a basket let down by a string. Into this he put the letters he had brought, and it re-ascended; after waiting a reasonable time, the silent messenger returned, and from it a precious packet was taken; nothing was said, the *conducteur* resumed his seat on the box,

* A very excellent picture on this subject, by Jouy, is in the Musée at Bordeaux: I did not see it, but it has been described to me by a person on whose judgment I can depend, who considers it of very high merit, and worthy of great commendation.

the horses were urged onwards, and we rattled forward on our way to Poitiers.

Mirebeau, though now an insignificant bourg, was formerly a place of some consequence. Its château was built by Foulques Néra, the redoubted Count of Anjou; and here, in 1202, Elionor of Aquitaine sustained a siege directed against her by the partisans of the Count of Bretagne, her grandson. Close by is a village, the lord of which had an hereditary privilege sufficiently ludicrous.

It appears that at Puy Taillé there must have been a remarkable number of serpents, who refused to listen to the voice of the charmer until the lord of the castle, *wiser* than any other exorciser, took them in hand. He was accustomed, at a certain period, to set forth in state, and, placing himself at a spot where he presumed he should be heard, raised his voice, and, in an authoritative tone, commanded the refractory animals to quit his estates. Not one dared to refuse; and great was the rustling, and hissing, and sliding, and coiling as the serpentine nation prepared to *déménager*, much against their inclination no doubt, but forced, by a power they could not withstand, to obey. None of these creatures interrupted our route, although there has long ceased to be a lord at Puy Taillé, and we arrived before day-break safely at the Hôtel de France, at Poitiers.



St. Porchaire, Poitiers

CHAPTER VI.

POITIERS—BATTLES—THE ARMIES—KING JOHN OF FRANCE—THE
YOUNG WARRIOR—HÔTEL DU VREUX—AMPHITHEATRE—BLOSSAC
—THE GREAT STONE—THE SCHOLARS—MUSEUM—THE DEMON'S
STONE—GRANDE GUEULE.

POITIERS is a city of the past: it is one of those towns in which the last lingering characteristics of the middle ages still repose; although they do so in the midst of an atmosphere of innovation.

Modern improvement, slowly as it shows itself, is making progress at Poitiers, as at every town in France, and quietly sweeping away all the records of generations whose very memory is wearing out. If new buildings and walks and ornamental *allées* were as quickly erected and carried out as they are conceived, it would be a matter of rejoicing that whole cities of dirt and wretchedness should be made to disappear, and new ones to rise shining in their place; but, unfortunately, this cannot be the case. There are too many towns in France in the same position as Poitiers, all requiring to be rebuilt from the very ground to make them *presentable* at the present day; blocks of stone strew every road, brick and mortar fill every street; a great deal of money is expended, but a great deal more is required; and, in the meantime, the new and the old strive for mastery, the former growing dull and dirty by the side of the latter, and, before the intended improvements are realized, becoming as little sightly as their more venerable neighbours.

Much of *old* Poitiers has been destroyed; and *new* Poitiers is by no means beautiful. It is better, therefore, except in a few instances, to forget that modern hands have touched the sacred spot, and endeavour to enjoy the reminiscences still left, of which there are a great number full of interest and variety.

When we sallied forth into the streets of Poitiers, our first impression was that of disappointment ; but we had not long wandered amongst its dilapidated houses and churches before the enthusiasm we expected to feel there was awakened, and the spirit of the Black Prince was appeased by our reverence for everything we met.

Poitiers belongs to so many ages—Gaul, Roman, Visigoth, Frank, English—that it holds a place in every great event which has occurred in France during the last nineteen centuries. Four important battles were fought in its neighbourhood : those of Clovis, of Charles Martel, of Edward of England, and of Henry III. of France ; all these struggles brought about results of the utmost consequence to the country. The fields where these battles were fought are still pointed out, though the site of each is violently contested by antiquarians.

That between Clovis and Alaric is now *said to be* determined as having occurred at Voulon, on the banks of the Clain, instead of Vouillé, which has long been looked upon as the scene. In the same manner, furious disputes have prevailed as to where the defeat of Abderraman, by Charles Martel, took place ; but we are bound now to believe that it was neither near Tours, Amboise, nor Loches, but at Moussais-la-Bataille, close to Poitiers, in the *delta* formed by the waters of the Vienne and the Clain.

The fatal fight, in which King John and all his chivalry were defeated by the Prince of Wales, is said, in like manner, to be between Beauvoir and Nouaille, and not at Beaumont, as has been asserted. There no longer exists a place called *Maupertuis*, which once indicated the spot; but it is ascertained that the part called La Cardinerie was once so designated, and, hard by, at a spot named *Champ-de-la-Bataille*, have been found bones and arms; which circumstance seems to have set the matter at rest. It matters little where these dreadful doings took place; all round Poitiers there are wide plains where armies might have encountered; but it would seem probable that the spot where the battle so fatal to France was really fought, must have been situated so as to have afforded the handful of English some signal advantage; or how was it possible for a few hundred exhausted men to conquer as many thousands! The English cross-bows, which did such execution, were most likely stationed at some pass in the rocky hills of which there are many, and their sudden and unexpected onset must have sent forth the panic which caused the subsequent destruction of the whole French army.

In fact, Froissart describes their position clearly enough. He names Maupertuis as a place two leagues to the north of Poitiers, and the spot chosen by the Black Prince as a hill full of bushes

and vines, impracticable to cavalry, and favourable to archers : he concealed the latter in the thickets, connected the hedges, dug ditches, planted pallisades, and made barricades of waggons ; in fact, formed of his camp a great redoubt, having but one narrow issue, guarded on each side by a double hedge. At the extremity of this defile was the whole English army, on foot, compact and sheltered on all sides ; while, behind the hill that separated the two armies, was placed an ambuscade of six hundred knights and cross-bowmen.

The French army was divided into three parts, and disposed in an oblique line. The left and foremost wing was commanded by the king's brother, the Duke of Orleans, the centre by the king's sons, and the reserve by the unfortunate monarch himself. Already the cry of battle was heard, when two holy men rushed forward to mediate between the foes ; but in vain. The Prince of Wales, — that mighty conqueror, — knowing his weakness, and feeling his responsibility, would have even consented to give back the provinces he had taken—the captives of his valour—and agreed to remain for seven years without drawing the sword. But King John demanded that he should yield himself prisoner, with a hundred of his knights ; and, confident in his strength, he had no second proposal to make.

Sixty thousand warriors, full of pride, hope, and

exultation, had spread themselves over the plains, confident of success, and looking forward to annihilate at a blow the harassed enemy which had so long annoyed them, but which were now hunted into the toils, and could be made an easy prey. The redoubtable Black Prince would no longer terrify France with his name: he knew his weakness, and had sent to offer terms the most advantageous, provided he and his impoverished bands might be permitted to go free; but, with victory in their hands, why should the insulted knights of France agree to his dictation? it were better to punish the haughty islanders as they deserved, and at once rid their country of a nest of hornets which allowed her no peace.

The king, his four sons, all the princes and nobles of France were in arms, and had not followed the English to listen to terms at the last moment. King John,—the very flower of chivalry, the soul of honour and valour,—rode through his glittering ranks, and surveyed his banners with delight and pride. “At Paris, at Chartres, at Rouen, at Orleans,” he exclaimed, “you defied these English; you desired to encounter them hand to hand. Now they are before you: behold! I point them out to you. Now you can, if you will, take vengeance for all the ills they have done to France; for all the slaughter they have made. Now, if you will, you may combat these fatal enemies.”

The signal was given: the gorgeous troops rushed forth, their helmets glittering with gold and steel, their swords bright, and their adornments gay; their hearts full of resolve, and their spirits raised for conquest. A short space of time sufficed to produce a strange contrast: twenty thousand men, with the Dauphin of France at their head, flying before six hundred tattered English! Chandos and the Black Prince behold from a height the unexpected event: they follow up the advantage; the hero of so many fights rouses himself, and becomes resistless as Alexander:

“ See how he puts to flight the gaudy Persians
With nothing but a rusty helmet on ! ”

Of all his hosts,—of all his friends, and guards, and warriors, and nobles, what remains to the French king? He stands alone amidst a heap of slain, with a child fighting by his side: their swords fall swiftly and heavily on every one that dares approach them; their armour is hacked and hewn; their plumes torn; the blood flows from their numerous wounds; but they still stand firm, and dispute their lives to the last. The boy performs prodigies of valour; he is worthy to be the son of Edward himself; but he is at last struck down, while his frantic father deals with his battle-axe blows which appal the stoutest heart. No one dares to approach the lion at bay: they hem him in; they call to and entreat him to lay down his

arms; he is blinded with the blood which flows from two deep wounds in his face; and, faint and staggering, he gazes round on the slaughtered heaps at his feet, and gives his weapon into the hands of an English knight.

Over and over again has the story of this defeat been told, yet is the relation always stirring, always exciting, and the remainder full of romance and glory to all parties concerned. The only blot upon the *ermine* is, that the valorous boy who so distinguished himself should, a few years later, forget the lesson of honour and magnanimity he then learnt, and, by his disgraceful breach of faith, expose the father he defended to so much sorrow and humiliation.

The *Roman* remains at Poitiers claim the first attention of the traveller; and we, therefore, soon after our arrival, walked down the rugged Rue de la Lamproie to an *auberge* which has for its sign a board on which is inscribed, “Aux *Vreux*-Antiquités Romaines.” The meaning of this mysterious word, which has puzzled many people, is this: Here formerly existed a house which belonged to a bishop of Evreux; and was, consequently, called Hôtel d’Evreux. The last proprietor, imagining that the word *Evreux* meant *Roman Antiquities*, was seized with the happy thought of changing it to *Vreux*, as simpler and more expressive; and so it has remained.

The *Vreux* are very curious, and give a stupendous idea of the size of the amphitheatre which once existed on this spot. The whole of the court and large gardens of this inn offer remains of the seats, steps, temples, and vaults. One huge opening is fearful to look at, and preserves its form entire: it appears to have been an entrance for the beasts and cars and companies of gladiators, which figured in the arena.

Garlands of luxuriant vines, with white and black grapes in clusters, now adorn the ruined walls; and fruit-trees and flowering shrubs grow on the terraces. It requires some attention to trace the form of the amphitheatre; as so many houses and walls are built in, and round about its site.

The foundation is attributed to the Emperor Gallienus, and occurred probably in the third century. Medals of many kinds of metal have been frequently found in excavating, which prove the period; but the learned have not been silent on so tempting a theme, and the history of the Arènes de Poitiers has occupied the attention of all the antiquaries of France. It appears that the size was greater than that of Nismes.

It is strange that so much of the ruins should still remain of the amphitheatre in spite of so many centuries of destruction acting upon it, and, notwithstanding its having been constantly resorted to

as a quarry, whenever materials were required for construction. In one of the quarters of the town, the Rue des Arènes and the Bourg Cani, where the poorest people live, almost all the houses are formed of the chambers belonging to a Roman establishment. The roofs of almost all are Roman : the cellars, the stables, and the granaries. No doubt Poitiers was a place of the greatest importance under their sway, as these extensive ruins indicate.

The park of Blossac is the most attractive promenade of Poitiers : it is beautifully laid out, and well kept. An intendant of Poitou, M. de la Bourdonnaye-Blossac, established it in 1752, with the benevolent intent of giving employment, in a hard winter, to the poor. In constructing it, a great many sepulchres of the Gauls, and funereal vases, were discovered ; some of which are preserved in the museum.

The view is charming from the terrace of Blossac above the Clain, and one is naturally led to pursue the agreeable walks which invite the steps at every turn. We found that, by following as they pointed, we should arrive at most of the places we desired to see ; and, as the interior of the town has few attractions in itself, we resolved to skirt it, and continue our way along the ramparts. They extend a long way, and are extremely pleasant in their whole extent. Remnants of ancient towers and rampart walls appear here and there, the river runs

clear and bright beneath, and beyond are gently undulating hills; while, occasionally, heaps of grey rocks, of peculiar forms, some looking like temples, others like towers, rise suddenly from their green base, surprising the eye.

In the direction of the most remarkable of these, may be found a *pierre levée*, said, by veracious chroniclers, to have been raised on the spot by the great saint of Poitiers, Sainte Radegonde, who is reported to have brought the great stone on her head, and the pillars which support it in the pockets of her *muslin apron*: one of these pillars fell from its frail hold to the ground, and the devil instantly caught it up and carried it away, which satisfactorily accounts for the stone being elevated only at one end. Unfortunately the same legend is so often repeated respecting different saints, and in particular respecting *Saint Magdalen*, who has often been known to establish herself in wild places, bringing her rugged stool with her, that it would seem some or other of these holy people *plagiarised* from the other.

Rabelais attributes this stone to Pantagruel, who, “seeing that the scholars of Poitiers, having a great deal of leisure, did not know how to spend their time, was moved with compassion, and, one day, took from a great rock, which was called *Passe-Lourdin*, an immense block, twelve toises square and fourteen *pans* thick, and placed it upon

four pillars in the midst of a field, *quite at its ease*, in order that the said scholars, when they could think of nothing else to do, might pass their time in mounting on the said stone, and there banquetting with quantities of flagons, hams, and pasties; also in cutting their names on it with a knife: this stone is now called La Pierre Levée. And in memory of this, no one can be matriculated in the said University of Poitiers who has not drunk at the cabalistic fountain of Croustelles, been to Passe-Lourdin, and mounted on La Pierre Levée."

Bouchet's opinion is, that the stone was placed by Aliénor d'Aquitaine, about 1150, to be used at a fair which was held in the field where it stands.

It is, no doubt, one of the Dolmen, whose strange and mysterious appearance may well have puzzled both the learned and unlearned in every age since they were first erected.

One of the most interesting monuments in Poitiers is the museum; for it is a Roman structure—a temple or a tomb—almost entire, and less injured than might have been expected, serving as a receptacle for all the antiquities which have been collected together at different periods, in order to form a *musée*. They are appropriately placed in this building, and are seen with much more effect in its singular walls than if looked at on the comfortable shelves of a boarded and white-washed chamber.

As is usual in these cases, disputes run high respecting the original founder and the destination of this building, unique in its kind. Some insist that it is a tomb erected to Claudia Varenilla, by her husband, Marcus Censor Pavius ; others see in it a pagan temple, transformed into a place of early Christian worship ; others, the *first cathedral* of Poitiers.

It has undergone numerous changes of destination, at all events, having been used as a church, as a bell-foundry, as a depôt for *economical soup*, and as a manufactory. The Society of Antiquaries have at length gained possession of it, and it is to be hoped that it will know no further vicissitudes.

In this temple may be seen numerous treasures of Gaulic and Roman and Middle-age art of great interest : sepulchral stones inscribed with the names of Claudia Varenilla, Sabinus, and Lepida ; Roman altars, military boundary-stones, amphoræ, vases, capitals, and pottery, all found in the neighbourhood of Poitiers : a good deal of beautiful carving from the destroyed castle of Bonnavet, fine specimens of the Renaissance, and numerous relics of ruined churches.

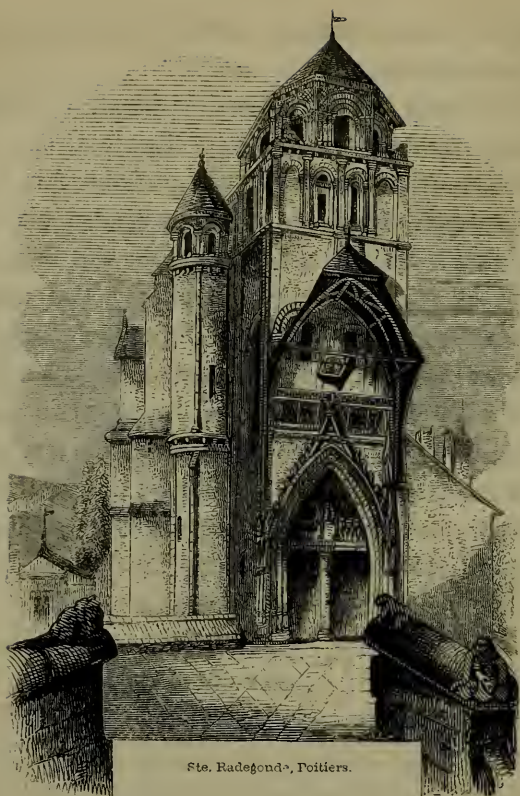
Among the treasures is a block of stone, said to be one on which the Maid of Orleans rested her foot when she mounted her horse, in full armour, to accompany Charles VII. on his coronation. A piece of stone from the old church of St. Hilaire

is exhibited, which, when struck, emits so horrible an effluvia as to render it unapproachable. The church is said to have been built of this stone; if so, the workmen must have been considerably annoyed while constructing it, and deserved *indulgences* for their perseverance in continuing their labour. It would appear that this is a calcareous* rock, which has been described by several French naturalists who have met with it in the Pyrenees, at the Brèche de Roland, and on the height of Mont Perdu, and whose odour of *sulphureous hydrogen* is supposed to arise from the animal matter enclosed in its recesses. Some marbles have the same exhalation, yet are employed in furniture: as the smell does not appear to be offensive unless the stone is struck with some force, it may, perhaps, be unobserved; but I could scarcely regret that the church of St. Hilaire was almost totally destroyed when I heard that such disagreeable materials entered into its construction. No doubt the presence of the arch-enemy was considered as the cause of this singular effluvia in early times,

* Calcaire hépathique. The stone used for the casing of the exterior of the Great Pyramid, and for the lining of the chambers and passages, was obtained from the Gebel Mokattam, on the Arabian side of the valley of the Nile. It appears to be similar to that named above, as it is described as being "a compact lime-stone," called by geologists "swine stone," or "stink-stone," from emitting, when struck, a fetid odour.

and the monks turned it, as they did all accidents, to good account.

The Grand Gueule, a horrible beast, discovered in the caverns of the abbey of Sainte Croix, who had eaten up several nuns, was probably found out by the smell of sulphur which pervaded his den, and brought forth to punishment by the holy men who were guided to his retreat by this means, —their instrument being a criminal condemned to death, who combated the beast, and killed him. The dragon was usually carried in processions, following the precious relic of a piece of the true cross which had vanquished him ; and his effigy in wood, with the inscription, *Gargot fecit*, 1677, exists still, though it has ceased to be used.



Ste. Radegonde, Poitiers.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTRE DAME—THE KEYS—THE MIRACLE—PROCESSION—ST. RADE-
GONDE—TOMB OF THE SAINT—FOOT-PRINT—LITTLE LOUBETTE—
THE COUNT OUTWITTED—THE CORDELIER—LATE JUSTICE—THE
TEMPLARS.

POITIERS is one of the largest towns in France, but is very thinly inhabited; immense gardens, orchards, and fields, extend between the streets; the spaces are vast, but there is no beauty whatever

in the architecture or the disposition of the buildings. The squares are wide and open, but surrounded by irregular, slovenly-looking houses, without an approach to beauty or elegance; the pavement is rugged, and cleanliness is not a characteristic of the place.

The churches are extremely curious, although, in general, so battered and worn as to present the aspect of a heap of ruins at first sight. This is particularly the case with Notre Dame, so revered by Richard Cœur de Lion, in the great *place*, before which a market is held. I never saw a church whose appearance was so striking, not from its beauty or grace, but from the singularly devastated, ruined state in which it towers above the buildings round, as if it belonged to another world. Nothing about it has the least resemblance to anything else: its heaps of encrusted figures, arches within arches, niches, turrets covered with rugged scales, round towers with countless pillars, ornaments, saints, canopies, and medallions, confuse the mind and the eye. All polish is worn from the surface, and so crumbling does it look, that it would seem impossible that the rough and disjointed mass of stones, piled one on the other, could keep together; yet, when you examine it closely, you find that all is solid and firm, and that it would require the joint efforts of time and violence to throw it down, even now.

The peculiar colour of the stone of which it is built, assists the strangeness of its effect ; for it has an ancient, ivory hue, and all its elaborate carving is not unlike that on some old ivory cabinet grown yellow with age. A long series of scriptural histories, from the scene in Eden, upwards, are represented on this wonderful façade ; besides much which has not yet been explained. Its original construction has been attributed to Constantine, whose equestrian statue once figured above one of the portals.

St. Hilaire, St. Martin, and all the saints in the calendar, still fill their niches, more or less defaced ; row after row, sitting and standing, decorate the whole surface, in compartments ; choirs of angels, troops of cherubims, surround sacred figures of larger size ; and when it is recollected that all this was once covered with gilding and colours, it is difficult to imagine anything more splendid and imposing than it must have been.

The interior suffered dreadfully from the zeal of the Protestants, who destroyed tombs and altars without mercy. One group—the Entombment of Christ—common in most churches, is remarkable for the details of costume it presents, and the excellence of its execution. It belonged formerly to the abbey of the Trinity, and has been transferred to Notre Dame. The date seems to be about the end of the fifteenth century ; the figures are of the natural

size, and the original colouring still remains ; the anatomical developments are faithful to exaggeration, and the finish of every part is admirable.

Some of the female heads are charming, with their costly ornaments, hoods, and embroidered veils ; and the male figures, with the strange hats of the period, like that worn by Louis XI., have a singularly battered and torn effect, in spite of the smart fringed handkerchiefs bound round them, with ends hanging down and pieces of plate armour depending from their sides.

Several of the adornments of the altars are those formerly belonging to the church of the Carmelites, now the chapel of the *grand seminaire*. Above the crucifix which surmounts the tabernacle, is attached to the roof a bunch of keys : these are, according to tradition, the same miraculous keys taken from the traitor who proposed to deliver them to the English. The history of this transaction is as follows :—

In 1202, Poitou had risen against John Lackland, of England, Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Poitou, taking the part of young Arthur, whom he had just made prisoner at Mirebeau. The town of Poitiers had closed its gates against John, warned by the example of Tours, which he had lately sacked and burnt. The King had posted his troops in the towns of Limousin and Perigord, with orders to his captains to endeavour to take Poitiers by surprise.

The mayor of Poitiers had a secretary who was

both cunning and avaricious, who, bribed highly by the English, had consented to deliver the town to them. Accordingly, on Easter eve, a party of the enemy, under false colours, arrived at the *Porte de la Tranchée*; the secretary repaired instantly to the chamber of the mayor, to which he had access, expecting, as usual, that the keys would be found there; but, to his surprise, they were removed, nor could he find them in any other accustomed place. The traitor hastened to inform the English of the fact, by throwing a paper to them from the ramparts, requesting that they would wait till four o'clock in the morning, when he should be able to execute his purpose. At this hour he re-entered the mayor's chamber, and telling him that a gentleman wished to set out on a mission to the king of France at that early hour, begged that the keys might be delivered to him. The mayor sought for the keys, but they were nowhere to be found: he suspected some treason; and without loss of time assembled the inhabitants, and required that they should go at once to the *Porte de la Tranchée*, in arms, to be ready in case of surprise.

The report soon spread that the English were at the *Tranchée*, and the belfry sent forth its peals to summon all men to arms: in a very short space the whole town was roused, and every one hurried to the gates, where a strange spectacle met their

view from the turrets. They beheld upwards of fifteen hundred English, dead or prone on the ground, and others killing them ! The gates were thrown open, and the inhabitants sallied forth, making the remainder an easy prey, and taking many prisoners : the which declared to the mayor and the dignitaries of the town all the treason which had been arranged ; and further related, that at the hour agreed on, they beheld before the gates a queen more richly dressed than imagination can conceive, and with her a nun and a bishop, followed by an immense army of soldiers, who immediately attacked them. They instantly became aware that the personages they saw were no other than the Blessed Virgin, St. Hilaire, and S^{te}. Rade-gonde, whose bodies were in the town, and, seized with terror and despair, they fell madly on each other and slaughtered their companions.

All the towns-people, on hearing this, offered thanks to God, and returned to keep their fast with great devotion. As for the disloyal secretary, his fate was not known, for he was never seen afterwards ; and, says the chronicler, “ it is natural to suppose that by one of the other gates he cast himself into the river, *or* that the devil carried him off bodily.”

The miracle had not ended there ; for while these things were going on at the gates, the poor mayor, in great perturbation, had hurried to the

church of Notre Dame la Grande, and throwing himself before the altar, recommended the town to the protection of God and the Mother of Mercy. "While he was praying, all on a sudden *he felt the keys in his arms*; at which he returned thanks to Heaven, as did many pious persons who were with him."

Bouchet, who relates this *fact*, adds:—"In memory of this *fine miracle*, the inhabitants of the said Poitiers have ever since made, and continue, a grand and notable procession of all the colleges and convents, every year, all round the walls of the said town, within, the day before Easter: the which extends for more than a league and a half. And in memory of the said miracle, *I have made these four lines of rhythm*:—

" L'an mil deux cens deux comme on clame,
Batailla pour ceux de Poictiers,
Contre les Anglois nostre Dame,
Et les garda de leurs dangiers."

In commemoration of this event, statues of the three saviours of the town were erected above the gate, and in a little chapel near: chapels to the Virgin were placed in every possible nook, and a solemn procession was instituted to take place every year, on Easter Monday, when the mayor's lady had the privilege of presenting to the Virgin the magnificent velvet robe, which she wore on the occasion. This ceremony was continued as late as

1829, since when the *cortège* no longer goes round the town as formerly, but a service is performed in the church.

The belief of this miracle seems to form an article of faith ; for the story was told me by three persons of different classes, all of whom spoke of it as a tradition in which they placed implicit credit.

Sainte Radegonde seems to hold, however, the highest rank of the three defenders of Poitiers. "She is a great saint," said the exhibitor of the Museum to me, "and performs miracles every day." "S^{te}. Radegonde," said the bibliothécaire—"is a great protectress of this town, and has personally interfered to assist us in times of need—but, perhaps, you are not Catholic."

"The great saint," said a votaress, who was selling *chapelets* at her tomb, "does not let a month escape without showing her power ; only six weeks ago a poor child, who was paralyzed, was brought here by its mother, having been given up by the doctors ; and the moment it touched the marble where it was laid, all its limbs became as strong as ever, and it walked out of the church."

We, of course, lost as little time as possible in paying our *devoirs* to so wondrous a personage. The church is a very venerable structure, surmounted by a spire covered with slate. The Saint was the wife of Clotaire the First, and quitted her

court to live a religious life, having built a monastery in honour of the true cross, a piece of which had been sent to her from Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian. She erected a church in honour of the Virgin, which should serve for a burial-place for her nuns ; this was beyond the walls of her monastery, and a college of priests was added to it to supply religious instruction to her community. The church was finished, and its foundress died in 587. She was interred there by the celebrated Gregory of Tours. The tomb, of the simplest construction of fine black marble, still exists in a subterranean chapel, the object of religious pilgrimages without end ; and when, in the fourteenth century, it was opened by Jean, Duc de Berry, Count of Poitou, brother of Charles the Wise, the body was found in perfect preservation. In 1562 the Protestants took possession of the church, and broke open the tomb, scattering and burning the bones ; but some of them were, nevertheless, gathered together and replaced in the marble, which was joined by iron cramps, and does not exhibit much injury.

This huge mass of black marble has a very disgusting appearance, from being entirely covered (except at one little corner, kept clean to show its texture) with the runnings of the countless candles perched upon it by the pilgrims, who arrive in such crowds at some periods of the year, that the vault becomes so hot and close as to be unsafe to

remain in long. These candles are kept constantly burning, and the devotion to the Saint also burns as brightly as ever. St. Agnes and St. Disciolus repose near their abbess. Pepin, King of Aquitaine, lies somewhere in their neighbourhood; but the exact spot is not ascertained.

A miraculous foot-print is still shown, which it is recorded that Jesus Christ left *when* he visited the cell of the holy abbess: the stone, carefully preserved, is called Le Pas de Dieu, and was formerly in the convent of St. Croix.

We had some difficulty to escape from the earnest exhortations of numerous devout sellers of rosaries, who insisted on our buying their medals, *chapelets*, &c., assuring us that they were of extraordinary virtue; and we could scarcely believe that we had not been transported several centuries back, when we saw the extreme devotion and zeal they showed, both towards the Saint, and the money she might bring from devotees.

Close to S^{te}. Radegonde is the cathedral church of St. Pierre, principally built by Henry II. of England, a very fine specimen of the grandest style of art; vast and beautiful, but with its naves rather too low. The principal portals are very much ornamented, and its towers have much elegance: but the restorations it has undergone have been injudicious, and the modern painted glass which replaces the old is extremely bad; but many of the

windows are of fine forms, and, on the whole, there is a good deal to admire in St. Pierre.

But little vestige remains now of the once famous convent of St. Pierre le Puellier, which owed its foundation to a miracle: it is one very often told as having occurred on like occasions; but is apparently still believed in Poitiers, where devotees of easy credence seem to abound.

Loubette was a young girl in the service of the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, and had been witness in Jerusalem of the discovery of the true cross. She was a native of Brittany; and how she came to the holy city does not appear; suffice it that she wished to return to her own country. The empress, in dismissing her, made her a present of a piece of the true cross, and a part of the crown of thorns. Loubette placed the relics in her *little bag*, and set out on her journey *on foot*. She was of very small stature, lame, and crooked, extremely weak, and hardly able to move; however, such as she was, she took her way from Jerusalem to Poitiers, where *having arrived*, and feeling fatigued, she lay down before she entered the town under a willow, hanging her little bag (*gibecière*) on a branch, and went to sleep. When she awoke she looked for her bag; but the branch she had hung it on—similar to the steeple to which the horse of the Baron, of veracious memory, was attached—had risen in the night to such a height,

“ that,” says the chronicler, “ the said virgin could not reach her said *gibecière*.”

She immediately sought the Bishop of Poitiers, who, struck with the miracle, recommended her to present herself to the Count of Poitou, and solicit of his piety the means of raising a church, and supporting a chapter of clerks and priests to do duty there. The Count of Poitou is said to have been joyous and pleased when he heard her relation ; but it does not appear that his generosity equalled his delight, for he did not seem disposed to grant anything to Loubette for the establishment of her church ; however, unable at last to resist her entreaties, he agreed to give her as much ground as so lame and weak a creature could creep over in a day : it appears that he was not aware of her expedition from the Holy Land.

He soon had cause to repent of his jest, for scarcely had Loubette commenced her walk, accompanied by the servants of the Count, than she distanced them all, and got over so much ground that they were terrified ; for, wherever she stepped, the ground rose and marked what was hers. The Count hurried after her in great alarm, and, stopping her progress, entreated her to be content with what she had already gained, as he began to think she would acquire all his domain.*

* The same legend is told as having happened in England on the domains of the family of Titchborne.

On the banks of the Clain is still pointed out a mound of earth on the spot where *Saint* Loubette crossed the river without wetting her feet.

There is no end to the miracles wrought in this favoured city: one is told so remarkable that it deserves to be recorded. It occurred in favour of Gauthier de Bruges, bishop of Poitiers—a very virtuous and learned man, who had from a simple *cordelier* been placed on the episcopal throne by Pope Nicholas III. A question of supremacy having arisen between the archbishops of Bourges and Bordeaux, Gauthier declared for the former, and was charged by him to execute some acts of ecclesiastic jurisdiction against his rival. The archbishop of Bordeaux afterwards became pope, under the name of Clement V., protected by Philippe le Bel, and in memory of his opposition deposed Gauthier, enjoining him to retire into his convent.

The bishop of Poitiers was obliged to submit to the authority of the sovereign pontiff; but at the same time protested against the abuse of power of which he was the victim; and he appealed against the sentence of deposition *to God and the council to come*. He died shortly after, and desired to be buried with his act of appeal in his hand.

When Clement V. came to Poitiers to treat with Philippe le Bel on *important and secret* affairs—nothing less than the suppression of the order of

the Templars—he lodged at the Cordelier convent, in the very church where Gauthier was buried. Being informed of the act of appeal which the unfortunate bishop would not part with at the time of his death, he had a great desire to see it, and commanded that his tomb should be opened. Accordingly, in the dead of night, by the light of torches, his desire was fulfilled. One of the pope's archdeacons descended into the vault, and in the dead hand of the bishop beheld the scroll: he endeavoured to take possession of it, but found it impossible to do so, so firmly was it grasped by the bony fingers. The pope ordered the archdeacon to enjoin the dead man to give it up on pain of punishment, which the other having done, and added, that he pledged himself to restore the paper when the pope had read it, the hand relaxed its grasp, and the act was released. The archdeacon handed it up to the pope; but when he tried to leave the vault, he found that a secret power prevented him from stirring from the place, and he was forced to remain there as hostage till the scroll was read and replaced in the hand of the bishop; he then found that his limbs had resumed their power, and he was able to quit the spot. Clement V., anxious to repair his injustice, afterwards paid extraordinary honours to the memory of Bishop Gauthier.

It was at this time, in 1306, the interview took

place which decided the fate of the Templars; the pope lodged with the Cordeliers, the King with the Jacobins, and, in order that they might confer more readily, a bridge was thrown across the street, forming a communication between the two convents. For sixteen months Clement remained at Poitiers on this important business; and here he had interviews with the master of the Templars, summoned from Cyprus for the occasion: here, most of the plans, destined to overthrow their dangerous power, were concocted, with less reference to justice than expediency.

The ancient palace of the Counts of Poitou is now the Palais de Justice. A fine Grecian portico which we had passed several times in our search for what we expected would be a Gothic entrance, leads to the only part which remains of the ancient building: namely, a magnificent hall of very large dimensions, surrounded by circular arches and delicate pillars, and having a good deal of fine carving, and an antique roof of chestnut wood. The exterior, which is adorned with figures of the sovereigns of Poitou, we could not get a glimpse of, as the palace is so hemmed in by buildings that it is only from the gardens and windows of some private houses that any view of it can be obtained. Elionore of Aquitaine, her husband and sons, often inhabited this abode; and it was in the great hall that Charles VII. was

proclaimed King of France. One can but regret that so little remains of the original structure, and that the buildings which modern taste and necessity have added, should so ill accord with the old model ; for nothing can be more misplaced than the *classic temple* which conducts to a Norman hall.



CHAPTER VIII.

CHÂTEAU DE LA FÉE—KING RENÉ—THE MINIATURES—THE POST-OFFICE FUNCTIONARY—ORIGINALITY—THE ENGLISH BANK-NOTE—ST. PORCHAIRE — THE DEAD CHILD — MONTIERNEUF — GUILLAUME GUY GEOFFROY—THOMAS À BECKET—CHOIR OF ANGELS—RELICS—THE ARMED HERMIT—A SAINT—THE REPUDIATED QUEEN—ELIONORE—THE BOLD PRIEST—LAY.

ONE of the most remarkable houses in Poitiers, of which not many ancient remain, is one now used as a school by the Christian Brothers. It is in the Rue de la Prévôté, close to the Place de la Piloni, and has been a prison. The door and windows are finely ornamented, as is the whole façade, with curiously-carved figures and foliage. Melusine, with her serpent's or fish's tail, and her glass and comb, appears amongst them—that

inexplicable figure so frequently recurring in almost every part of France, and even yet requiring her riddle to be solved. As we knew that this part of the world was her head-quarters, we resolved to visit her at her own castle of Lusignan, which would be in our way when we left Poitiers. In this we were confirmed when we went to the Bibliothèque, for the gentleman to whom we were indebted for much attention in showing us the chief treasures there contained, recommended us not to pass by without seeing the ruins of the *château de la Fée*.

The university of Poitiers formerly held a very high rank, and was frequented by scholars from every part of the world. France, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany, sent their students: it was founded by Charles VII., and Pope Eugène IV., and was in great esteem in spite of the jests of Rabelais and others at its expense. One old author speaks somewhat irreverently of the learned town; calling its students “the flute-players and professors of the *jeu de paume* of Poitiers.” Corneille makes his *Menteur* a pupil of the college of Poitiers; but Menot, a preacher of the period of the League, has a passage in one of his sermons which is sufficiently complimentary: in relating the Judgment of Solomon, he makes him say to one of the women, “Hold your tongue, for I see that you have never studied at Angers or

Poitiers, and know not how to plead." It is now the head of an academy which comprises the four departments of Vienne, Deux-Sèvres, La Vendée, and Charente Inférieure.

The public library is very extensive, and possesses many valuable volumes. The first library named in French history is that of William the Ninth, Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, which was preserved in his palace at Poitiers. At the revolution, all that ages had accumulated was dispersed, but much has since been re-collected, and amongst the twenty-five thousand volumes there are many very precious. There are more than fifteen hundred works relative to the history of Poitou, and it has, within a few years, been enriched by a present from the British government of a fine collection of historical and legal documents connected with this part of the country.

That which, however, interested me most, was a beautiful manuscript, said to have been executed by no other hand than the royal one of the good King René. I have no doubt it was done by a very skilful artist whom his munificence protected; but if, as is probable, he painted the work on chivalry now in the King's library at Paris, he did *not* paint the beautiful leaves of the Psalter which is attributed to him; there is too much knowledge of art in the latter to permit one to imagine that the same person could do both; for though the

work on chivalry has great merit, it is of an inferior kind to this. The birds, the flowers, the foliage, and the miniatures, are in perfection, and betray an Italian touch; true it is that the celebrated partridges, which King René loved so well to paint, are frequently repeated, and the legend is told while the manuscript is being looked at, of his occupation in depicting his favourite bird, when he was informed of the loss of his kingdom, and so interested was he in his work that he never laid down his pencil, but proceeded to finish it off as if nothing had happened. Still, I think, whoever painted this book was the royal amateur's master in the art; it appears certain that the beautiful volume was presented by him to Jeanne de Laval, his wife: it is decorated with the arms of Anjou, Sicily, and Laval, and the gold and azure are brilliant beyond description, the doves and other birds are of glittering plumage, and the flowers charming. Another psalter, of still more exquisite execution, is of later date, 1510; and though the gold is far less dazzling than that which adorns René's book, nothing can exceed the beauty of the birds and flowers introduced on the margins. One leaf, *all owls*, has a peculiarly *feathered* appearance; the solemn birds sit on wreaths in the most elegant attitudes, and at the top of the page one *Grand Duke*, larger and more dignified than the rest, seems to look down on his

people with satisfaction. The lupins, monkshood, marguerites, and other simple flowers, so often introduced in illuminated borders, are done with infinite skill, and *strewn* about the gold ground as if scattered there by chance: some with their stalks upwards and in disorder, evidently showing that they were painted from nature, probably from the artist's own garden in his convent.

We found in Poitiers amongst the people, very little pride of their town; they seem in fact to be inspired with a spirit of depreciation, which surprised me; and I have seldom found in any French town so much difficulty in discovering old houses and sites. "Ah, ça ne vaut pas la peine, ma foi! c'est bien vieux!" was the general answer given to any inquiry.

I had occasion to go to the post-office for letters from England, having sent the *commissionnaire* of the inn in vain. I knew that several were waiting for me, but being positively told that there were none, was going away, much disappointed, when a man ran after me across the great square, begging that I would return, as the director wished to speak to me. I did so immediately, when I was accosted by a person I had not before seen, who, instead of producing my letters, began a conversation on the subject of Poitiers, and my journey to it; having informed himself where I came from, with all the minuteness of an American questioner, he pro-

ceeded to say there were letters for a person of my name; but as he required my passport, which I found to my vexation I had left at the inn, I was tantalized with a view of the handwriting of my friends through a grating. The functionary, however, detained me still to entreat that I would satisfy his curiosity as to what we could possibly have been admiring the evening before on the ramparts near the Porte du Pont Joubert, on the banks of the Clain. "I observed you, ladies," said he, "pointing to the opposite hills, which are nothing but blocks of grey rocks, ordinary enough, and leaning over the walls watching the course of the river, which is but a poor stream; and remarking the trees on the promenades, which, after all, are but trees; in fact, it puzzled me to think what strangers could find at Poitiers to like."

Much amused at his originality, and the singular way in which he showed it, I replied that we found much to admire in the walks, the scenery, and the churches, and were surprised that he thought so little of his native town. He seemed, as well as several of his assistant clerks, and a person who patiently waited for his letters till the interview was concluded, to think me much the most original of the two; and, having no more to say, handed me my letters with the remark that I need not fetch my passport, as he had no doubt they were really destined for me. It was then evident to my mind

that he had laid this plan to detain the inquisitive travellers who had excited his curiosity, till he could catechise them himself, and to that end had lured us *in person* to the post-office, and detained us and our letters till his pleasure was secured. We were not sorry that nothing more was likely to arrive at Poitiers for us, as we were to pay so much for the delivery. It appears that strangers rarely remain more than a few hours here, which may account for so much interest being excited in the solitary town by our strolling.

We had delayed changing some English money, and thinking it best to do so in case of necessity, inquired the way to a banker's. We were directed to several; but, apparently, business was not very urgent with them, for at most of the houses we found the head person gone into the country, and no delegate left. At last, we met with one at home; but he appeared utterly at a loss when he looked at the unlucky English bank-note which we presented to be changed, never, as he assured us, having seen such a *bit of paper* before; but kindly offering, if we would leave it a few hours, to have it seen and commented on, and then, if approved, and we liked to pay a somewhat unreasonable number of francs, the sum should be delivered to us. We thought the whole transaction so *bizarre* that we declined his offer, resolving rather to trust to chance till we reached La Rochelle,

—our next destination—than put ourselves to the charges he recommended. He returned our note with a mortified air, saying, “Very well; as you please; but there are people in Poitiers who would not give two sous for your bit of paper.” The house in which he lived had a very antique appearance, and we had mounted a curious tower with winding-staircase to reach his bureau; I therefore asked him if there was anything remarkable attached to its history; but he seemed never to have thought about it, and merely remarked that it was “bien vieille; mais rien de plus.” He looked after us with pity, as we took our leave, and probably entertained himself afterwards at our expense with his townsman of the post-office: “Ces Anglais! sont-ils originaux! par exemple!”

Nothing daunted, we proceeded to visit the curious old church of St. Porchaire, once a monastery dependent on the chapter of St. Hilaire le Grand. The church of the priory is that part which remains. The interior is quite without beauty; but what is worthy of note is its fine Roman tower, and a portal of great singularity. The latter is ornamented with medallions of the rudest workmanship; one capital represents Daniel and the prophet Habakkuk, with lions of a strange shape; but, in order that no mistake may arise as to their identity, besides the inscription which surrounds the medallion, *Hic Daniel Domino*

vincit cætum leonum, the artist has engraved, in conspicuous letters, between the animals, the word *Leones*.

The church of St. Hilaire—a great saint in Poitiers—has been so much altered as to leave little very interesting of its original construction. This saint was much distinguished for the miracles he performed; the memory of one is still preserved by a pyramid, with mutilated bas-reliefs, recording the facts thus related by the annalist of Aquitaine:—

“When St. Hilaire visited the churches of the city, as he went through the streets he was followed by so many people that he could hardly be seen, for he was on foot. A woman, who lived in a house now situated before the *Grands Escolles*, knowing that he was passing her dwelling, while she was bathing her infant, seized with an ardent desire to behold the saint, left it in the bath, and ran out; when she returned she found her child drowned. Whereupon she called out, ‘Oh, my God! shall I lose my child for having done that which was praiseworthy!’ and in a rage of grief took her little dead child in her arms, covered with a piece of linen, and carried it to St. Hilaire, to whom she declared the case and the accident, praying him, in great faith and hope, to entreat of God that her child might be restored to life.

“St. Hilaire, seeing the grief of the poor

mother, who had but this only child, and also her great reliance, and considering that the infant had died in consequence of the mother's great desire to see him, set himself to pray, prostrating himself on the earth with great humility and tears, where he remained a long time. And he, who was of a great age, would not rise from that posture till God had, at his request, resuscitated the child. He then, taking it in his arms, presented it to the mother, who gave it nourishment before all the people, who, full of wonder, gave thanks to God and St. Hilaire."

The church of Montierneuf is one of the most ancient in Poitiers. It contains the tomb of its founder, Guillaume Guy Geoffroy, Count of Poitiers and Aquitaine; who, having led a very irregular life, thought to atone for all, by erecting a magnificent monastery for Cluniac monks. Except this tomb, there is little remaining of interest; but the effigy of Guillaume is well executed and curious, as he lies with his long curled hair and his crown, his *aumônière*, and his singularly-shaped shoes. He was one of the most daring of those wild Williams who distinguished themselves for profligacy; but this pious act of his seems entirely to have redeemed his memory.

It is recounted that, while the abbey was in progress, the King of France, Philippe I., came to Poitiers, hoping to induce William to assist him

against the Duke of Normandy. The monarch, struck with the grandeur of the new constructions, exclaimed that they were "worthy of a king;" to which the Count replied, haughtily, "Am I not, then, a king?" Philippe did not see fit to make any further rejoinder on so delicate a subject.

The tomb of this redoubted prince was opened in 1822, and the body found quite perfect; as this circumstance, which is by no means unusual, was in former times always considered as a proof of the sanctity of the person interred, it is to be hoped all the stories of Count William's vagaries are mere scandals, invented by evil-disposed persons; and that the history of his having established a convent, all the nuns of which were persons of more than suspected propriety, and having placed a female favourite of his own at their head, had no foundation in truth. Something similar is told of several powerful princes, so it may well be a fable altogether.

The botanical garden of Poitiers now occupies the place where the abbey of St. Cyprian stood, with all its dependencies; we sat on some reversed capitals, which now form seats in a flowery nook, and climbed a stair of a tower where seeds are dried,—the only morsel of the great convent now existing. Bouchet tells one of his strange stories of a monk of this monastery, which is curious, as it relates

to that dangerous and powerful subject of the harassed King of England, Henry II., who must have had enough to do to circumvent the art and cunning of the wily archbishop who was always working for his ruin and the exaltation of the Church. The annalist relates that—

“At this period, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, in England, was a fugitive from his country, because the English princes desired to kill *and* put him to death: for that he would not agree to certain constitutions, statutes, and ordinances, that Henry II. and the princes of England had made against the liberties and privileges of the Church, and the holy canons thereof. For they wished to confer dignities and other benefices and take the fruits, thereby profaning the sanctuary of God. And the said archbishop was seven years, or thereabouts, in France, which land is the refuge of popes and holy personages; and he had great communication and familiarity with the said Pope Alexander, he being in the town of Sens, where he chiefly staid while in France. And the archbishop was sometimes at the abbey of Pontigny, and sometimes at the monastery of St. Columbe. Now, I read what follows in an ancient *pancarte* of the abbey of St. Cyprian of Poitiers, brought there by a monk of the said, called Babilonius, who, for some grudge owed him by his abbot, was driven from his abbey, and went to complain of his

wrong to Pope Alexander at Sens, while the Archbishop Thomas sojourned there; from whom this monk received a holy vial to place in the church of St. Gregory, where reposes the body of the blessed Saint Loubette. I have translated the said writing from Latin into the vulgar tongue, seeing that it contains some curious things. It begins, ‘Quando ego ‘Thomas Archiepiscopus,’ &c.

“When I, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, exiled from England, took refuge with Pope Alexander, who was also fugitive, in the town of Sens, and there represented to him the bad habits and abuses that the King of England had introduced into the Church; one night as I was in the church of Sainte Colombe, engaged in prayer, supplicating the Queen of Virgins that she would vouchsafe grace to the King of England and his successors, that they might have power and will to be obedient to the Church as her children, and that our Lord Jesus Christ would cause them more fully to love the said Church, suddenly appeared to me the Blessed Virgin Mary, having on her breast a drop of water, glittering like fine gold, and holding in her hand a little vial (*ampoule*) of stone. And after she had taken from her breast the drop of water and put it in the vial, she spoke to me these words; ‘This is the unction with which the kings of England shall be anointed; *not those who reign now, but those who are to reign*; for those

who reign now are wicked, and so will be their successors, and, for their iniquity shall lose many things. However, kings of England shall come, and shall be anointed with this unction, and shall be benign and obedient to the Church, and shall not possess their lands or lordships until they are so anointed. The first of these shall recover, without violence, the countries of Normandy and Aquitaine, which their predecessors had lost. This king shall be great amongst kings, and it will be he who shall re-edify many churches in the Holy Land, and drive all the pagans from Babylon, where he shall erect rich monasteries, and put all the enemies of religion to flight. And when he wears about his neck this drop of golden water, he shall be victorious and augment his kingdom. *As for thee, thou shalt die a martyr for sustaining the rights of the Church.*' I then prayed the holy and sacred Lady to tell me in what sanctuary I should place this sacred deposit; and she replied, that there was in this city a monk of the monastery of St. Cyprian of Poitiers, named Babilonius, who had been unjustly driven forth by his abbot, where he desired to be reinstated by apostolic authority; to him I was ordered to give this vial, in order that he might carry it to the city of Poitiers, and place it in the church of St. Gregory, which is near the church of St. Hilaire, and put it at the extremity of the said church, towards the east, under a great

stone, *where it would be found* when the proper hour arrived to anoint the kings of England, and *that the chief of the Pagans should be the cause of the discovery of the said golden drop*. Accordingly I enclosed this treasure in a leaden vessel, and gave it to the said monk, Babilonius, to bear to the church of St. Gregory, as it was commanded."

What object *Saint Thomas* of Canterbury had in thus mystifying the monks of Poitiers, or to what *prince* or *pagan* he pointed at, remains a secret: whether the holy vial ever was found cannot now be known; or, if any discovery of such was made in that period of discoveries, the great Revolution, it was probably consigned to destruction with numerous other equally authentic relics. The most remarkable sentence in this *pancarte* is, perhaps, the prophecy of his own death by the martyr, always admitting that the whole was not composed and arranged after the event had happened.

Bouchet, glad of the opportunity of dwelling on wonders, finishes his tale by relating the circumstances of Becket's murder, and how at his burial a choir of angels led the anthem, which the monks followed: also how the cruel homicides by the judgment of God were suddenly punished; for some of them *ate their own fingers*, others became mad and demoniacs, and others lost the use of all their limbs.

The relics in the churches of Poitiers were of the

most extraordinary value ; each vied with the other in wonders of the kind, until all the bones of all the saints in the calendar seemed gathered together in this favoured city. Whenever a prince had offended the Church, he made his peace by presenting some precious offering which was beyond price ; as, for instance, in 1109, the Duke of Aquitaine, father of Elionore, after having been pardoned for one of his numerous offences, caused to be enclosed in a magnificent shrine of gold, *two bones and part of the beard* of the blessed Saint Peter, prince of apostles, which St. Hilaire himself had brought to his church. Soon after, to prove his repentance of some new peccadillo, Guillaume gave certain *dismes* to the monks and priests of St. Hilaire, with the use of the forest of Moulière.

St. Bernard himself was obliged on one occasion to come to Poitiers to admonish the refractory duke, who chose to have an opinion of his own in acknowledging the pope, and many miracles were performed during his stay. Once St. Bernard severely reprimanded the duke at the altar, in the cathedral, who was for the moment terrified at his denunciations ; but no sooner had he left the church than he ordered the altar at which the saint had stood to be demolished ; and a priest to proclaim and command the adherence of all persons to whatever pope their duke had adopted ; but this impiety was signally visited, for the priest fell down dead

at the altar as he was uttering the words. Also the dean, under whose auspices St. Bernard's altar had been destroyed, *fell sick* immediately, and died mad and in despair, for he cut his throat in his bed : besides which, one of the refractory bishops—he of Limoges—fell from his mule to the ground, and striking his head against a stone, was killed on the spot ; and for these *reasons* and *evident signs*, Duke William acknowledged his error, and replaced the Bishop of Poitiers, whom he had deposed, in his chair.

This is the William, known by his romantic adventures as “ The Armed Hermit,” who, no doubt, disgusted with the tyranny of the Church, whose members at that time never ceased to interfere with the monarchs of Europe, resolved to abandon his kingdom, and embrace a life of quiet, as he supposed, “ in some *horrible desert*.” He was encouraged in the idea by interested persons, and *feigning to die*, left a will, by which his young daughter, Elionore, became the heiress of Aquitaine ; he then secretly quitted the court, directing his steps to the shrine of St. James, in Galicia, where he joined a holy hermit, and put himself under his tuition. By *diabolic temptation* it seems, however, that he could never be content in any of the deserts ; where, still clothed in armour, *cap-à-pié*, he endeavoured in vain to forget his belligerent propensities, for, every now and then, when he heard of a siege

toward, he would suddenly sally forth, and having assisted in the skirmish, again seized with a fit of repentant devotion, would hurry back to some desolate retreat, and endeavour, by penitence and fasts, to obliterate the sin he had committed.

His death was attended by so many miracles that it became necessary to canonize him; and orders of hermit monks rose up in every quarter, bearing his name of Guillemins, the chief of which were the Blanc Manteaux of Paris. The example of sanctity he had set in the latter part of his life seemed to have been lost on the turbulent and coquettish Queen of the Court of Love, his daughter, Elionore, and to have been also sufficiently disregarded by his grandsons. Not that Elionore neglected to build and endow churches and monasteries in every part of her dominions, particularly at Poitiers; and, probably, she considered all offences wiped out by so doing: not excepting her criminal project, recorded by Bouchet, of quitting her husband, Louis of France, and "*espousing the Sultan Saladin*, with whose image and portraiture she had fallen in love."

Whatever motives Louis le Jeune had in getting rid of his powerful wife, policy could not be one; for never was a more foolish business; he did not, perhaps, contemplate, in his shortsightedness, that she would marry his rival, and carry all her possessions to the crown of England; but he was sure that by

dissolving his marriage he was injuring France. The account of the state of the great heiress, insulted and injured in so vital a point, is piteous enough, and not unlike, in position, to the case of Queen Catherine when repudiated by Henry VIII.

“ This dissolution and separation was signified to Queen Elionore by the bishops, who undertook the task with great regret, for they knew it would be very displeasing to the poor lady, who, as soon as the decision was announced to her, fell in a swoon from the chair on which she sat, and was for more than two hours without speaking, or weeping, or unclosing her clenched teeth. And when she was a little come to herself, she began, with her clear and blue (*vers*) eyes, to look around on those who brought her the news, and said, ‘ Ha ! my lords, what have I done to the king that he should quit me ? in what have I offended him ? what defect finds he in my person ? I am not barren, I am not illegitimate, nor come of a low race. I am wealthy as he is by my means. I have always obeyed him ; and if we speak of lineage, I spring from the Emperor Otho the First and King Lothaire ; descended in direct line from Charlemagne ; besides which we are relations both by father and mother if he requires to be informed of it.’ ”

“ Madam,” said the Archbishop of Limoges, “ you speak truth indeed. You are relations ; but

of that the king was ignorant, and it is for that very cause that he finds you are not in fact his wife, and the children you have borne him are not lawful; therefore is this separation necessary, much to the king's discomfort; he laments it as much or more than you can do; but he finds that for the safety of your souls this thing must be done."

The poor queen could only reply that the pope had the power to grant a dispensation; but she had no longer any relations to support her, and still less had she friends; and was obliged to submit. She was then about six-and-twenty, and the most beautiful woman in France. Henry of Normandy lost no time in making his proposals to her, which she at first rejected, being, as she said, resolved never to trust another man; but his eloquence, and other qualities, and the policy of placing herself in a powerful position as his queen, heir as he was of England, caused her to alter her mind; and Henry gained the richest wife in Europe and lost his happiness for ever.

There is a frequently-repeated story told of one of the most celebrated counts of Poitiers, though attributed sometimes to William VIII. and sometimes to William IX. The series of *Williams* all appear to have been more or less *de rudes seigneurs*, who were divided between the vices and virtues of their period. There is William *Tête d'Etoupes*, William *Fier-à-bras*, William *the Great*, and William *the Troubadour*; the

latter—now pious, now profane—was at one time fighting foremost in the christian ranks against the Paynim ; at another, “ playing on pipes of straw and versing love ” to fair ladies, to whom he had no right to make himself captivating. He is said to have repudiated his wife, Phillippa, or Mahaud, and espoused Malberge, the wife of the Viscount de Châtelleraud, in the life-time of her husband. For this offence the Bishop of Poitiers resolved to punish him, and, accordingly, on occasion of a grand public solemnity, in the face of the assembled multitude, he began the formula of excommunication against the offending count, regardless of consequences. When William heard, as he sat with his bold and beautiful lady-love, the first words of the anathema, he started from his seat, in a transport of surprise and rage, and, drawing his sword, rushed upon the unflinching churchman, who entreated him to allow him a short delay. The count paused, and, taking advantage of the circumstance, the bishop raised his voice, and finished the form of excommunication in which he had been interrupted. “ Now,” said he, “ you may strike ; I have done my duty and am ready.” William was abashed and humbled, and, returning his sword to its scabbard, exclaimed, “ No, priest, I do not love you well enough to send you straight to Paradise.” He had not, however, the grace to pardon the intrepid priest, for he banished him to

Chauvigny, where he shortly afterwards died, in 1115. The following is one of the lays of this famous Troubadour, whose songs are the earliest extant :

Anew I tune my lute to love,
Ere storms disturb the tranquil hour,
For her who strives my truth to prove,
My only pride, and beauty's flower ;
But who will ne'er my pain remove,
Who knows and triumphs in her power.

I am, alas ! her willing thrall ;
She may record me as her own :
Nor my devotion weakness call,
That her I prize, and her alone :
Without her can I live at all,
A captive so accustom'd grown ?

What hope have I ?—Oh lady dear !
Do I then sigh in vain for thee ;
And wilt thou, ever thus severe,
Be as a cloistered nun to me ?
Methinks this heart but ill can bear
An unrewarded slave to be !

Why banish love and joy thy bowers—
Why thus my passion disapprove ?
When, lady, all the world were ours
If thou couldst learn, like me, to love.



CHAPTER IX.

MELUSINE — LUSIGNAN — TROU DE LA FÉE — THE LEGEND — MALE CURIOSITY — THE DISCOVERY — THE FAIRY'S SHRIEKS — THE CHRONICLER — GEOFFROY OF THE GREAT TOOTH — JACQUES CŒUR — ROYAL GRATITUDE — ENEMIES — JEAN DU VILLAGE — WEDDING — THE BRIDE — THE TRAGEDY OF MAUPRIER — THE GARDEN — THE SHEPHERDESS — THE WALNUT GATHERERS — LA GÂTINE — ST. MAIXANT — NIORT — MADAME DE MAINTENON — ENORMOUS CAPS — CHAMOIS LEATHER — DUGUESCLIN — THE DAME DE PLAINMARTIN — THE SEA.

FULL of anxiety to visit the famous Château of Lusignan—the very centre of romance and mystery—we left Poitiers in the afternoon, and, in two hours, reached the prettily-situated bourg on the banks of the river Vanne. We looked out constantly for the towers of the castle of Melusine, but none appeared. At last I descried a building on an eminence, which I converted at once into

the object desired; but, as the rain had come on violently and the atmosphere was somewhat dull, I was not surprised that I did not obtain a better view of the turrets and donjon, which no doubt frowned over the plain beneath.

Our vehicle stopped in the middle of a very unpromising stony street, before a house which presented no appearance of an inn. Here, however, we were told that we were to alight; and, having done so in a somewhat disconsolate mood, for the storm had increased in violence, our baggage was to be disengaged from the huge pile on the top of the diligence, while we stood by to recognise it. The whole town, meantime, seemed to have arrived in this, the principal street; and a host of men in blouses paused round us, all looking with wonder on our arrival, apparently amazed at our absurdity in stopping at Lusignan; in which reflection we began to share, as they took possession of our trunks, and examined them without ceremony, while the conducteur searched his papers, in a sort of frenzy, to find our names inscribed, and convince himself that we were the persons named there as his passengers. As we had only been "set down" as "Dames Anglaises," he seemed inclined to dispute our identity; and he, and a man who acted as post-master, conned over the paper together, while all the inhabitants who could get near

endeavoured to catch a peep, not only at the scroll, but the suspected persons. At length, as we protested against lingering in the rain any longer, further enquiries were abandoned; the conducteur mounted his box; the post-master called porters; and the crowd made way for us, while we followed half-a-dozen guides, who made as much of their packages as they could; and we at last found shelter. The aspect of affairs now changed: a very neat landlady, and a smart waiting-maid, ushered us into a pretty, clean, decorated, raftered room,—the best in the *Lion d'Or*,—up a flight of tower stairs; our porters disappeared; the street was cleared; curiosity seemed amply gratified; and we were left to a good dinner, and in comfortable quarters. The sun broke forth, and all looked promising; but where were the towers of the castle?

This question we repeated frequently, and the answers assured us that *là haut* we should see the castle and the “*Trou Meluisin*.” We slept well in our snow-white beds; occasionally hearing, during the night, the cracked, hollow, unearthly sound of the great church bell of the Lusignans, to which an equally ghost-like voice on the stair replied. At day-break the noise of hilarity roused us, and we found that a rural meeting was taking place below, in the *grand salon*. Our friends of the day before seemed all met previous to setting out to begin the walnut gathering; and they uttered

strange jocund sounds, more wolfish than human, without a word which could be, by possibility, construed into the French language.

We hurried up the rugged way which was to lead us to the castle; but, having reached the height, I rubbed my eyes, for I thought the fairy had been busy during the night, and, by a stroke of her wand, had swept away every vestige of the castle. Certain it was that not a stone was left,—not a solitary piece of wall or tower, to satisfy our curiosity! A pretty little girl of fifteen, who had hurried after us, now approached, and offered to be our *guide*. We accepted her civility, as we hoped something would ensue: she led us to a heap of bushes, and, stooping down and pulling them aside, proclaimed to us, as she pointed to a dark chasm beneath, that we stood at the entrance of the “Trou de la Fée.” “This,” said she, “is the hole which she used to enter, and it has a way which leads to the wood yonder: she could there rise up at her fountain, where she bathed; and from thence there is another way leading as far as Poitiers itself.” We asked her if the fairy ever appeared now; but she laughed, and said, contemptuously, “Oh! no, that is all fable: it was a great while ago.” She had a tragical story of a soldier who descended, resolving to attempt the adventure; but he was never seen afterwards, as might easily be expected. She,

however, accounted for his fate without attributing it to supernatural causes : the superstition of Melusine has disappeared with the turrets of her castle.

The church is curious, though very much defaced : in the sacristy is a circular-arched door, elaborately sculptured with the signs of the Zodiac ; but the formerly-existing stones on which the effigy of the fairy appeared have been entirely swept away.

The castle of Lusignan was once one of the most beautiful and powerful *châteaux forts* in France ; so strong and so singular in its construction that it was attributed to an architect of a world of spirits, — the famous witch, or fairy, Melusine ; about whom so much has been written and sung for ages, and who still occupies the attention of the curious antiquary. Her story may be thus briefly told :

She was married to the Sire Raymondin, of Poitiers ; who, struck with her surpassing beauty, and aware of her great wealth and possessions, had won her from a host of suitors. He was, however, ignorant that her nature was different from that of others ; and, when she informed him that, if she consented to be his wife, he must agree that she should, once a week, absent herself from him, and must promise never to attempt to penetrate the retreat to which she retired, he gave an unconditional assent. They had been married some time, and their happiness was

complete ; but at length Raymondin's mind began to be disturbed with uneasy thoughts, and the demon of curiosity took possession of him. His wife disappeared every week for a single day—some say Saturday—and he had no idea where she went, or what she occupied herself about. Was it possible, thought he, that she had some other attachment ? Could she be capable of deceiving his affection ? Every time she returned to him she looked more lovely than ever ; and there was a satisfaction in her aspect that was far from pleasing him. She never alluded to the circumstance of her retreat ; but redoubled her tenderness and kindness to him ; and, but for the growing and increasing anxiety he felt to know the truth, he might have been the happiest of men.

Melusine had, according to her wont, taken leave of him on the accustomed night of her retirement ; and he found himself alone in his chamber. He mused, long and painfully, till he could endure his thoughts no longer ; and, catching up his sword, he rushed to the tower, at the door of which he had parted with his mysterious lady. The door was of bronze, elaborately ornamented with strange carvings : it was thick and strong ; but, in his frenzy of impatience, he did not hesitate to strike it violently with his sharp sword ; and, in an instant, a wide cleft appeared, disclosing to him a sight for which he paid dear.

In the centre of the chamber he beheld a marble basin, filled with crystal water; and there, disporting and plunging, was a female form with the features of his wife. Her golden hair, in undulating waves, fell over her white bosom and shoulders, and rested on the edge of the basin, and on the surface of the water; her hands held a comb and a mirror; and in the latter she occasionally gazed intently as a series of figures passed across it. Down to her waist it was Melusine; but below it was no longer the body of a woman, but a scaly marine monster, who wreathed a glittering tail in a thousand folds; dashing and casting the silver waves in every direction, and throwing a veil of shining drops over the beautiful head above, till the walls and ceiling shone with the sparkling dew, on which an unearthly light played in all directions!

Raymondin stood petrified, without power to speak or move. An instant sufficed to disclose to him this unnatural vision; and an instant was enough to show the fairy that her secret was discovered. She turned her large lustrous eyes upon him, uttered a loud, piercing shriek, which shook the castle to its foundation, and all became darkness and silence. The lord of the château passed the rest of his life in penitence and prayer; but the lady was never afterwards seen by him.

She had not, however, abandoned her abode;

and, always, from that time till within a few years, she returned whenever any misfortune threatened the family of Lusignan, screaming round the walls, and rustling with her serpent folds along the passages, announcing the event. In 1575 the castle was razed, by order of the Duke de Montpensier, and for several nights previous to its demolition, Melusine startled the country round with her piercing cries. It is even said that certain ancient women in Lusignan hear her occasionally; but we were not so fortunate as to meet with any who had been so favoured.

Bouchet, in his chronicle, acknowledges himself greatly puzzled to account for the legend of Melusine; for, though he does not hesitate to believe anything advanced by the Church, he does not feel bound to put entire faith in a book of romance. "As for me," he says, "I think and conjecture, that the sons of Melluzine performed many fine feats of arms; but not in the manner related in the romance; for it must be recollected that at the period of 1200 were begun to be made many books, in gross and rude language, and in rhythm of all measure and style, merely for the pastime of princes, and sometimes for flattery, to vaunt beyond all reason the feats of certain knights, in order to give courage to young men to do the like and become brave; such are the said Romance of Melluzine, those of Little Arthur

of Brittany, Lancelot du Lac, Tristan the Adventurous, Ogier the Dane, and others in ancient verse, which I have seen in notable libraries : the which have since been put into prose, in tolerably good language, according to the time at which they were written, in which are things *impossible to believe, but at the same time delectable to read*. But, in truth, all that romance of Melluzine is a dream, and cannot be supported by reason. You may see, in the said romance, that the children of Melluzine, Geoffrey la grande-dent, and Guion, and Raimondin, her husband, a native of Forez, were Christians, and that they fought against, and conquered, the Turks, and that the said Raimondin was nephew to a Count of Poictou, named Aymery, who had a son called Bertrand, who was count after him, and a daughter, Blanche. Now I have not been able to find in any history, letter, nor *pancarte, though I have carefully searched*, that, since the passion of our Lord, there has been a duke or count in Poictou, called either Bertrand or Aymery ; nor that there have been any such but what I have enumerated. And as for those events having happened before, it could not be ; for there were then no Christians living, our Lord and Redeemer not being then on earth."

The confused chronicler then proceeds to tell the whole serpent-story, hinting his suspicions that the lady was discovered by her husband to be

unfaithful, and giving an etymology to her name, similar to one we heard on the spot, namely, that she was lady of *Melle*, a castle near. Our village archæologist added, however, that this castle was called Uzine, and as both belonged to her, she was so called, Melle-Uzine. -

In the fourteenth century, the estates of Lusignan passed into royal possession. Hugues le Brun left in his will great part of the estates to the King of France, Phillippe le Bel. His brother, Guy, irritated at this disposition of the property, cast his will into the fire; on which the king had him accused of treason, and took possession of the county of Lusignan, which became confiscated to the crown. It was on this sad occasion that, for twelve successive nights, the spirit of Melusine appeared on the platform of the castle, wailing and lamenting in a pitiable manner, and making the woods and groves re-echo with her sorrows.

There is another account, that the castle was greatly added to by a powerful lord, called *Geoffrey of the Great Tooth*, son of Melusine, whose effigy might once be seen over the principal entrance of the donjon-tower; but his existence is as great a problem as that of the fairy herself.

Henry II. of England took the castle, and came here in triumph with his warriors. Louis XII. when Duke of Orleans, passed several sad years in these walls as a prisoner. It was taken by Admiral

de Coligny, in 1569; but it was lost soon after, and again and again retaken, partially destroyed, and rebuilt, and at length swept away altogether, leaving nothing but recollections, a piece of old tower, and Le Trou de Melusine.

It once had three circles of defence, bastions, esplanades, moats, and walls; embattled gates, one called the Gate of Geoffrey of the Great Tooth, one the Gate of the Tour Poitevine, and the gigantic Tour de Melusine in the centre of all; its subterranean ways, strange legends, mysterious passages, and enormous strength, made it a marvel in all times, and a subject for romance from the earliest ages.

M. Francisque Michel is the last who has endeavoured to collect its curious records, and throw some light on its strange history.

In this castle was imprisoned, during his iniquitous trial, which is an eternal blot on the name of his ungrateful *friend*, Charles VII. of France, the rich and noble merchant of Bourges, Jacques Cœur, whose purse had been opened to the destitute king in his emergencies, and who had devoted all the energies of his mind to save his country from the ruin which the idle favourites who surrounded the throne were assisting as much as possible. His princely liberality, his foresight, and promptitude, had rescued Charles from perils which seemed insurmountable. He had come forward with a sum

of great magnitude, at the moment when his royal master was so distressed that he could not undertake the conquest of Normandy, then possessed by the English. He paid and supported an army, and Normandy was restored to France. He rescued the country from poverty and misery, placed its finances in a flourishing condition, drove marauders from the desolated land, and saw the little King of Bourges the powerful monarch of regenerated France. Then came his reward. His inveterate "adversary and enemy, the wicked Haman," who had been for years watching to accomplish his downfall, because his evil was not good in the sight of the right-minded and true-hearted friend of his country,—the detestable Antoine de Chabannes, Count of Dammartin, rightly judging that Charles would be glad to rid himself of so enormous a burthen of gratitude as he owed to Jacques Cœur, concerted with other spirits as wicked as himself, and succeeded but too well.

The first step was to shake the public faith in those at the head of the financial department; but they feared to attack the friend of Charles, and the acknowledged benefactor of France, *at first*. Money they were resolved to have, at any rate, without delay, and their first victim was Jean de Xaincoings, receiver-general. A series of charges were got up against him, which he was unable to overcome; he was convicted, sen-

tenced, imprisoned, and his property confiscated. Great was the exultation of the dissolute lords of the Court, when, in the scramble, each got a share of the spoil. Dunois—*Le Gentil Dunois*!—the hero of so many fights—was one of the first to profit by the downfall of this rich man: his magnificent hôtel at Tours was bestowed on the warrior, who did not blush to receive it.

Encouraged by this success, and becoming more greedy as they saw how easy it was to work on the king, when money was in view, the foes of Jacques Cœur set about accomplishing a similar work, with his colossal fortune in view as their prize.

At first, there seemed danger in proposing to the weak monarch to despoil his friend, and to annihilate a friendship of years, and obligations of such serious moment; but, to their surprise and delight, they found his ears open to any tales they chose to bring; and having, in a lucky hour, fixed on an accusation likely to startle such a mind, they found all ready to their hands.

Dammartin brought forward a woman, base enough to swear that the fair and frail Agnes Sorel had been poisoned by his treasurer. The infamous Jeanne de Vendôme, wife of the Lord of Mortagne sur Gironde, was the instrument of Chabannes, and her accusation was believed and acted upon. A host of enemies, like a pack of wolves eager for prey, came howling on, and the

great merchant was dragged from his high seat and hunted to the death.

In this very castle of Lusignan, where the fairy Melusine might well lament over the disgrace of France, in a dungeon, removed from every hope, languished the man who had, till now, held in his hand the destinies of Europe; whose galleys filled every port, whose merchandise crowded every city, who divided with Cosmo de Medici the commerce of the world. Here did Jacques Cœur reflect, with bitter disappointment, on all the selfishness, cruelty, meanness, and ingratitude, of the man he had mainly assisted to regain the throne of his ancestors. It was here he was told that the falsehood of the charge against him had been proved; but when he quitted this, the first prison which the gratitude of the king had supplied him with, it was but to inhabit others; while a crowd of new accusations were examined, one of which was enough to crush him. The game was in the hands of his foes; his gold glittered too near their eyes; their clutches were upon his bags; their daggers were ready to force his chests; they were led on by one whose avarice was only equalled by his profligate profusion, and he was a prisoner kept from his own defence.

The wealth of Jacques Cœur was poured into the laps of *Charles* and his harpy courtiers, and the victim was consigned to oblivion. Of all he had saved and supported, one man alone was

grateful—*Jean du Village*, his clerk, devoted himself to his master's interests, and his life, and part of his property abroad, were saved.

The fate of the great merchant is still a mystery. His mock trial was decided by the commission appointed to examine him at the castle of Lusignan, in May, 1453, and judgment was pronounced by Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins, chancellor of France, after the king *had taken cognisance of and approved it!* *

A wedding was going on while we were wandering between the castle and the church, and we met the party on our way, preceded by the usual violin accompaniment. Our young guide was greatly interested in the proceedings, and told us the names and station of the parties concerned. "What an odd thing it is," said she, "to be married. For two or three days everybody runs out of their houses to stare at the bride and bridegroom, as if they were a king and queen, though one has seen them a thousand times before, and, after that, they may pass in the street and nobody thinks of looking at them."

Marie Poitiers and René Blanc were the happy pair on this occasion; the name of the bridegroom amused me, as I was reminded of the perfumer and poisoner of Queen Catherine, René Bianco, who had

* For account of Jacques Cœur and his dwelling at Bourges, see "Pilgrimage to Auvergne."

lately furnished me with a *hero* for a romance. This René was, however, a very harmless-looking personage, a daily labourer, but “bien riche,” as was his bride, who also worked in the fields, but had a very good property near Lusignan. “All the family are very well off; but they work like other people. Only you see,” said our guide, “that the bride’s sister, who is so pretty, dresses in silk like a *grande dame*, and does not wear the peasant’s cap like the rest.” The cap of the bride was worthy



of attention, as were those of most of the party. As they were amongst the first of the kind we had seen, they attracted us extremely, though we afterwards got quite familiar with their strange appearance. In this part of the country, the peasants wear a cap, large, square, and high, of a most inconvenient size, and remarkably ugly shape: they get larger and squarer as you approach La Rochelle, and cease before you arrive at Bordeaux.

The bride's was of thin embroidered muslin, edged with lace, placed in folds over a high, square quilted frame, which supported it as it spread itself out, broad and flaunting, making her head look of a most disproportionate size. Silver ribbon bows and orange flowers were not omitted, and she wore a white satin sash tied behind, which floated over her bright gown and apron. A large silver cross hung on her breast, her handkerchief was richly embroidered, and her stockings very white and smart, though her feet and legs were somewhat ponderous, and did not seem accustomed to their adornment of the day, *sabots* of course being her ordinary wear. She was led by her father, whom I mistook for the mayor, he was so decorated with coloured ribbons, and strode along with so dignified an air, his large black hat shading his happy, florid face.

The bridegroom closed a very long procession, as he led the bride's mother along : they were going to the Mairie, where, after signing, Mad^e. Blanc would take her husband's arm, and walk back again through the town to hear mass, when *ses bagues* would be presented to her by her lord. Great excitement seemed to prevail in Lusignan, in consequence of this event, and smiles and gaiety were the order of the day.

Our hostess proposed accompanying us to a château not far distant, in order that we might see

the country, and as it was fine and not very damp we set out with her, having stopped in the town at a little chandler's shop for her sister who wished to be of the party.

Their mother—a dignified old lady, who looked as if she had been a housekeeper at some château—welcomed us into her shop, and set chairs while her daughter was getting ready, when she resumed her knitting, and conversed on the subject of their metropolis, Poitiers, with which she appeared partially acquainted. She detailed to us several of the miracles of S^{te}. Radegonde, for whom she had an especial respect, and assured us there was no saint in the country who had so distinguished herself. I was surprised, after this, that she treated the story of Melusine as a fable, though she believed in the existence of the subterranean way, and told us of the riches supposed still to exist beneath the castle and in the ruins. One man, lately, in taking away stones to build a house, stumbled on a heap of money which had evidently been placed for concealment beneath the walls, and coins of more or less value, and of various dates, are found, from time to time, as the large stones are removed for building, any one being at liberty to demolish whatever ancient wall they find in the neighbourhood.

Our walk was an extremely pleasant one, for the country round is very pretty and rural; it termi-

nated at the Château de Mauprier, a private residence, which appears to have been formerly a fortified manor-house, to judge by its moat and the square and round towers which still remain. The "park" leading to it is a series of beautiful alleys, some of the trees of which are allowed to grow naturally, others are cut into form, with fine grassy walks between, covered with rich purple heath here and there in nooks. The walks branch off from space to space in stars, leaving open glades of emerald turf between.

As we approached the lodge through the slovenly gate half off its hinges, the sound of wailing reached us from within, and, entering the room whence it proceeded, we became witnesses of a sad scene of desolation. There was no fire on the hearth, all looked dismal and wretched; a great girl of twelve stood sobbing near the table, a younger one sat at the door, and, with her feet on the damp earthen floor, rocking herself backwards and forwards on a low chair, sat a small, thin woman, moaning piteously, and wringing her hands.

Of course we thought she was bewailing some severe domestic bereavement, and our companions, who were full of friendly commiseration, began to question her, but could obtain no answer but tears and cries. At length, by dint of coaxing and remonstrance, we discovered that the tragedy which had happened was as follows :

The gardener-porter was entrusted by his master with the care of the live stock of the farm; his wife had sent a child of about eight years of age into the woods with a flock of turkeys; the young guardian had been seduced by fruit or flowers to wander away, forgetting her charge, and they followed her example, and dispersed themselves in all directions. The consequence was, that an ill-disposed fox, who was lying in wait, took the opportunity of way-laying them, and no less than seven had become his victims: the little girl had returned to tell her loss, was beaten and turned out of doors; the husband's rage had been fearful, and, though a night and day had elapsed, and the second evening was coming on, the disconsolate wife had not risen from her chair, nor ceased her lamentations. The turkeys must be replaced; the little girl was not her own, but an *enfant trouvée*, whom she had nursed and loved as her own—and how was she to be received after her crime! the husband was irate, the children were miserable, neither cookery nor fire were to be seen, and despair reigned triumphant. A small present, and a good deal of reasoning, brought her a little to herself; and we persuaded the eldest girl to light the fire, and give her mother something to revive her; the father was sent for; but the poor woman fainted, and we lifted her into bed; where we at length left her now repentant husband attending her, and

promising to reproach no one any more about the fox and the turkeys.

Nothing could possibly do less credit to the gardener than the appearance of the grounds, where liberty reigned triumphant; every thing, from enormous gourds of surprising size to grape-vines in festoons, being allowed to grow as it listed; yet the original laying out was pretty, and if half-a-dozen men were employed, as would be the case in England, the gardens might be made very agreeable. The proprietor is, however, an old man who spends a great deal of his time in Poitiers; and, as all French people do when at their country places, merely conceals himself for a few months, and cares little about appearances, provided his fruit and vegetables are produced in the required quantity. We heard that he was a most excellent and indulgent man, very liberal to the poor, and generous to his people; and our hostess assured us, that if he knew of the wretchedness the loss of his turkeys had caused in his gardener's family, it would give him real pain, and he would at once forgive them their debt to him. Perhaps the knowledge of his kindness might be one reason of his servant's vexation; but though that feeling was honourable to him, we could not forgive him for his severity to his poor, silly terrified little wife.

As we returned by another, and a very pretty

way, we met a young girl, to whom our guides, who were zealous in the cause, told the story of her neighbour's illness; she promised to go to her and offer her aid as soon as she could, and expressed her disgust at the cruelty of the husband, whose character, she said, was brutal in the extreme. While they were talking, I remarked the appearance of the shepherdess, who was certainly one of



the most charming specimens of a country Phillis I ever beheld. Her age might be about eighteen; she was tall, and well made, with a healthy, clear complexion, a good deal bronzed with the sun; teeth as white as pearls, and as even as possible; rather a wide, but very prettily shaped mouth; fine nose; cheeks oval and richly tinted; fine black eyes filbert shaped, and delicately-pencilled eyebrows, perfectly Circassian; a small white forehead, and shining black hair in braids: the expression of her smile was the most simple and innocent

imaginable, and the total absence of anything like thought or intellect, made her face a perfect reflection of that of one of her own lambs. Her costume was extremely picturesque ; and her head-dress explained at once the mystery of the cap of Anne Boleyn, of which it was a model, no doubt an unchanged fashion from the time of, and probably long before, Marguerite de Valois. It was of white, thick, stiff muslin, pinched into the three-cornered shape so becoming to a lovely face, precisely like the Holbein head, but that the living creature was much prettier than the great master usually depicted his princesses. Her petticoat was dark blue, her apron white, and so was her handkerchief, and round her handsome throat was a small hair chain, or ribbon, with a little gold cross attached. Her feet were in *sabots* ; and she held a whip in her hand, with which to chastise her stray sheep ; on her arm hung a flat basket, in which were probably her provisions for the day, or she might have filled it with walnuts which were being gathered close by. I never saw a sweeter figure altogether, and her merry, ringing laugh, and curious *patois* sounded quite in character ; she was just the sort of girl Florian must have seen to describe his Annette from ; but I did not meet with any peasant swain in the neighbourhood worthy to have been her Lubin. Her beauty was, however, rare, for we were not struck with any of the peasants besides,

as more than ordinarily good-looking ; but, seen anywhere, this girl must have attracted attention.

We soon, on entering a long avenue, came upon a party of walnut-gatherers, to whom the tragedy of the fox was again detailed, while groups came round us to hear and comment on the event, which appeared to be formed to enliven the monotony of a country existence as much as a piece of scandal in a town.

Seated on the ground, quietly eating walnuts, in the midst of a ring of other children, sat the little delinquent of the tale, as unmoved and unconscious as if she had not caused a perfect hurricane of talk and anxiety in the commune ; she turned her large gypsy black eyes on me with an expression almost of contempt, as I asked her a few questions, and recommended her caution in future. As one of the reports we had gathered on our way was, that the child, after being beaten, had run away into the woods and had not since re-appeared, we were not sorry to find her here ; but as she looked saucy and careless, and able to bear a good deal of severity, and was besides several years older than had been represented, our sympathy was little excited in her favour. “ She has acted in this way often before,” said a bystander, “ and cannot be made to work or to do anything she is told.” She had strangely the appearance of a Bohemian, and her fondness

for the *dolce far niente* increased my suspicions of her parentage. The tenderness of her foster-mother for her was, however, not to be changed by her ill-conduct, for she was said to prefer her to her own children, in spite of her faults: so capricious is affection.

The road from Lusignan to Niort is through a very pleasing country, sometimes *bocage*, and sometimes *gâtine*: the latter term being generally applied to a country of rocks, where the soil does not allow of much cultivation. This is, however, not always the case, for on several occasions I have heard, as at Chartres, a little wood called *la gâtine*; and once at Hastings was surprised, on inquiring my way in the fields, to be directed to pass the *gattin* hard by; namely a small copse. The word is said to be Celtic, and may be derived either from *geat*, which means a plot of ground, or *geas*, a thick branch.

We were much struck with the town of St. Maixant; which is approached by beautiful boulevards, and the environs are very rich and fine; the road does not lead within the walls, but outside; and there was no reason to regret this, as the streets are narrow and ill-built, while the promenades round are charming. The Sèvre Niortaise bathes the foot of the hill on which St. Maixant stands, and beyond rises the forest of Hermitaine, once part of the celebrated Vauclair, where some famous

hermits took up their abode, and made the spot holy. Clovis assisted the recluses who had chosen this retreat as their abode, and granted them land and wood ; a monastery was soon formed and the town grew round it. There is a fine cascade near La Ceuille, of which, or rather of the stream which flowed from it, we caught a glimpse on approaching St. Maixant ; it falls from the *côteau* called Puy d'Enfer, and it is one of the wonders of the neighbourhood. The old walls of the town now appear to enclose gardens, and all looks smiling and gay ; but they have sustained many a rude siege at different periods, and suffered much during the wars of La Vendée.

At mid-day we reached Niort, a fine, clean, good-looking new town, with scarcely any antiquity left, though of ancient renown : a Celtic city with a Celtic name ; a castle whose date cannot be ascertained ; a palace inhabited by the great heroine of the country, Elionor ; and convents and monasteries of infinite wealth and celebrity. That singular and famous community established by the Troubadour Count of Poitou, Guillaume IX., was at Niort, and was replaced by the holy Capuchin brothers, who must have been sufficiently scandalized at the conduct of the fair devotees who preceded them in their cells.

The Duchess Elionor was married to Henry II. at Niort, and lived here frequently. We hoped to

see some remains of her palace, but found only a large square building which might have formed a part of it; though its form, which is an isolated tower, makes it difficult to imagine how it could be in any way connected with the rest of the palace; this tower is now used as the Hôtel de Ville; its lozenge and circle ornaments appear not to be of older date than Francis I.; and we could scarcely persuade ourselves, however ready to believe in antiquities, that the all-powerful lady of Aquitaine, or her warrior husband, ever sat within these walls.

A curious privilege was granted by the pope, in 1461, to the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs, councillors, peers, and citizens of Niort, to be buried in the habit, and with the cord round their waists, of the Cordeliers: it is not recorded that the ladies of the town petitioned to be dressed as well in their coffins as the nuns whose beauty delighted William the Ninth, or they might have gone to their last fête in—

“A charming chintz and Brussels lace.”

The most remarkable recollection connected with Niort, is that, in the prison of the town, called La Conciergerie, where her father was confined for the crime of forgery, was born Françoise D'Aubigné, afterwards the wife of Scarron, and by the favour of Louis XIV., Marquise de Main-

tenon, in whom the triumph of hypocrisy was complete. One of the streets is called by her name; but it is not recorded that she ever did anything for her native town; probably she was not anxious to perpetuate the memory of any part of her early life, not seeing fit to be quite so communicative on the subject as her brother, whose tongue she had so much difficulty in keeping quiet.

Niort is a very pleasant, lively-looking town—that is, for a French town, where the nearest approach to gaiety is the crowd which a weekly market brings, or the groups of laughing, talking women, which the ceaseless occupation of washing collects on the banks of the river. We were much amused here with the latter, and stood some time on the bridge below the frowning round towers, of strange construction, which serve as a prison, to observe the manœuvres of the washerwomen, who, in their enormous, misshapen, towering, square caps, were beating and scrubbing away at their linen. Nothing can appear so inconvenient as this head-dress when its wearer is engaged in domestic duties; yet the women are constantly to be seen with it; rarely, as in Normandy, contenting themselves with the under frame alone, and placing the huge mass of linen or muslin over it when their work is done. On one occasion we travelled with a *bourgeoise* whose cap was so

enormous, that she could scarcely get into the coach, and when once in had to stoop her head the whole time to avoid crushing the transparent



superstructure of lace and muslin, which it is the pleasure of the belles of Poitou to deform themselves with. We were, however, assured that this costume was becoming, and that many a girl passed for pretty who wore it, who would be but ordinary in a plain, round, every-day cap. Sometimes this monstrosity is ornamented with gold pins, or buttons, all up the front, and the variety of arrangement of the muslin folds, both before and behind, is curious enough. It has occasionally frilled drapery depending from its height, hanging about half way down behind, or crossed over and sticking out at the sides, making it as wide as possible; I have seen some that could not be less than a foot and a half

wide, and about a foot high ; but some are even larger than this, extravagant as the description appears. The pyramidal Cauchoise caps are as high, it is true, or even higher, but there is an approach to grace in them, while those of Poitou are hideous as to form, even when the materials are light ; those of the commonest sort are of coarse linen or cotton, and reach the very acme of ugliness.

One of the great articles of commerce here is the preparation of chamois leather, which is said to be brought to great perfection ; but, perhaps, like the cutlery so celebrated in so many towns, and boasted of as *equal to the English*, this famous production might be looked upon by an English tradesman as mere “leather and prunella.”

There is an attempt at a *passage* here—the great ambition of country towns which think to rival Paris ; but, as usual, it appears to be a failure, the shops looking common-place and shabby, and the place deserted and dismal. The public library is good, and there are several handsome public buildings ; the churches are without interest, except one portal of Notre Dame, where we observed some mutilated, but very beautiful, twisted columns, whose wreaths were continued round a pointed arch in a manner I never recollect to have seen before, and which seems to indicate that the church must once have been extremely elaborate in its ornament.

Niort was a great object of contention during the wars of the Black Prince. The famous Duguesclin is said to have taken the town by stratagem from the English.

At the siege of Chisey, where Duguesclin had been successful, he had killed all the English garrison; and, taking their tunics, had clothed his own people in them, over their armour: so that, when those of Niort saw his party approaching, and heard them cry, "St. George!" they thought their friends were returning victors, and readily opened their gates; when they were fatally undeceived; being all taken or put to the sword.

Here Duguesclin, and his fortunate band, remained for four days; reposing and refreshing themselves. After which they rode forth to Lusignan: where they found the castle empty; all the garrison having abandoned it as soon as the news of the taking of Chisey reached them. The French, therefore, without trouble, took possession of "this fine and strong castle," and then continued their way to that of Chatel-Acart, held by the Dame de Plainmartin, for her husband Guichart d'Angle, who was prisoner in Spain.

When the lady found, says Froissart, that the constable Duguesclin was come to make war upon her, she sent a herald to him, desiring to be allowed a safe conduct, that she might speak with him in his tent. He granted her request; and

the lady accordingly came to where he was encamped in the field. Then she entreated him to give her permission that she might go safely to Poitiers, and have audience of the Duke de Berry. Duguesclin would not deny her, for the love of her husband, Guichart; and, giving her assurance that her lands and castle should be respected during her absence, she departed, and he directed his troops to march on Mortemer.

Such good speed did the lady of Plainmartin make, that she soon arrived in Poitiers; where she found the Duke de Berry. He received her very graciously, and spoke very courteously to her, as was his wont. The lady would fain have cast herself on her knees before him; but he prevented her. She then said: "My lord, you know that I am a lone woman, without power or defence, and the widow of a living husband, if it so pleases God; for my lord Guichart is prisoner in Spain, and in the danger of the king of that country. I therefore supplicate you, that, during the enforced absence of my husband, you will grant that my castle, lands, myself, my possessions, and my people, shall be left at peace; we engaging to make no war on any, if they do not make war on us."

The Duke de Berry made no hesitation in granting the prayer of the lady; for, although Messire Guichart d'Angle, her husband, was a good and

true Englishman, yet was he by no means hated by the French. He, therefore, delivered letters to her, with guarantee of surety; with which she was fully satisfied and much comforted. She then hastened back to her castle, and sent the orders to the constable, who received them with much willingness and joy. He was then before the castle of Mortemer; the lady of which at once yielded it to him, out of dread, and placed herself in obedience to the king of France, together with all her lands and the castle of Dienne.

We left Niort at day-break and continued our way through a very cultivated and rich country, admirably laid out, neatly enclosed, and with a great extent of very carefully-pruned vines, which had here lost the grace which distinguishes them in the neighbourhood of the Loire, where they are allowed to hang in festoons, and grow to a reasonable height. Here they are kept low, and seem attended to with care. The road is level, but the scenes pleasing and the air fine; though, as you advance in the ancient Aunis, towards the sea, low grounds, which have been marshes, extend to a considerable distance. As we approached La Rochelle this was very apparent; but still all looked rich and agreeable, and the idea of soon feeling the sea-breeze was so comforting that our spirits were greatly raised; and when on a sudden a broad glare, at a distance, of bright sunshine on

an expanse of water broke on our view, we were quite in ecstasies. We could distinguish white sails, and towers, and spires, on the shore; and all the memories of the Protestant town came crowding on our minds, as we turned every windmill we saw into an ancient tower formerly defended by a brave Huguenot against a host of besiegers. There are no want of these defences round La Rochelle; and every windmill has a most warlike aspect, as they are all built in the form of round towers, of considerable strength; probably owing to the necessity of making them strong enough to resist the gales which frequently prevail.



La Rochelle.

CHAPTER X.

LA ROCHELLE—LES TROIS CHANDELIERS—OYSTERS—BATHING ESTABLISHMENT — GAIETY — MILITARY DISCIPLINE — CURIOUS ARCADES—STORY OF AUFRÉDY.

ON arriving at La Rochelle, early in a bright morning at the beginning of September, we found the town so full that we had immediately to institute a search for an hotel, as that at which we stopped had no accommodation. We judged so before we alighted from the *coupé*, by the air of indifference visible on the face of every waiter and

chambermaid, to whom our arrival seemed a matter of pity, rather than congratulation. After seeking through the greatest part of the town, we were conducted to a curious-looking street, from the roofs of almost every house in which projected grinning *gargouilles*, whose grotesque faces peeped inquisitively forth from the exalted position which they had maintained for several centuries; and, glaring in inviting grandeur, swung aloft a board on which was depicted three golden candlesticks. At Les Trois Chandeliers, accordingly, we applied, and found admission; the slovenly, but good-humoured landlady bestirring herself instantly to get ready the only room she had vacant. She was assisted in her various arrangements, or rather attended, by a sulky-looking girl with a hideous square cap; who stood by while her mistress heaped mattress upon mattress, and bustled about with zealous noise and clatter. She gave us to understand that certain of her neighbours were apt to give themselves airs, and accept or refuse visitors as their caprice dictated; but, for her part, she had no pride, and never acted in so unkind a manner: she always attended to everything herself; so that every one was satisfied in her house, and the Trois Chandeliers maintained its reputation of a century, during which time it had always been kept by one of the family. Considering these facts, the state of the entrance and kitchen, through

which, as is usual in France, visitors must pass to arrive at the *salon*, somewhat surprised us. The wide, yawning, black gulf, down which we had dived from the street, reminded us strongly of the entrance of the Arènes, at Poitiers, which gave passage to the beasts about to combat: it was a low, vaulted passage, encumbered with waggons and diligences and wheelbarrows, with no light but what it gained from the street and a murky court beyond; it was paved with uneven stones, between which were spaces filled with mud; dogs and ducks sported along the gutter in the centre, following which, you arrived at some dirty steps leading to the kitchen, or, if you preferred a longer stroll amidst the shades, you might arrive at a low door which led through another court to the dining-room, which was a handsome apartment adorned with statues and crimson-and-white draperies, with a flower-garden opening from it. This room we were not sorry to enter, lured by the promise of some of the finest oysters in Europe. We had heard their eulogium before from a very talkative artist of Poitiers, who described them as of enormous, nay incredible, size, but delicate as *natives*: we were, therefore, surprised to see perfect miniatures, not larger than a shilling, very well-flavoured, but *unfed*. They form the *délices* of all this part of the world, at this season, and are eagerly sought for from hence to the furthest navigable point of the Garonne.

We were particularly fortunate in the weather, which was bright, warm, and inspiring; and when we reached the walk which leads to the baths, we were in raptures with the whole scene which presented itself. The fine broad sea, smooth and green, lay shining in the sun, without a ripple to disturb its serenity; and for about a quarter of a mile along its margin extended one of the most beautiful promenades I ever beheld. The first part of it is planted with small young trees, on each side of a good road, which extends between verdant plains where *glacis* are thrown up. This leads to the great walk; a thick grove of magnificent trees, shading a very wide alley of turf of *English* richness. Here and there are placed seats, and all is kept with the greatest neatness. The establishment of the baths is ornamental, and pretty, and very extensive. About half way up this promenade, next the sea, grounds laid out with taste, and affording shade and pastime in their compartments, surround the building. A Chinese pagoda, a Grecian temple, numerous arbours and seats are there for strollers; and swings and see-saws for the exercise of youthful bathers after their dips. Altogether, it is the most charming place of the kind I ever saw: the warm baths are as good as possible, and the arrangement of those in the sea are much better than at Dieppe, Havre, or Granville. There is a row of little pavilions on

the edge of the sea, where bathers undress ; and a paved way leads them to an enclosed space where are numerous poles fixed, with ropes reaching from one to the other at different depths. The bathers hold by these ropes : and a large company can thus assemble in the water together, and take as much of the sea as they please, unaccompanied by guides ; but, if they are timid, there are *men* ready to attend and protect them. The costume is a tunic and trowsers of cloth or stuff, with a large handkerchief over the head. Hour after hour will the adventurous bathers continue in the water ; dancing, singing, and talking, while the advancing waters dash, splash, and foam all round them, exciting peals of laughter and screams of delight.

Separated by a high partition, and at a little distance, overlooked, however, by the strollers in the gardens above, is the gentlemen's compartment. These bathers usually run along a high platform, considerably raised, and leap into the sea beneath them ; diving down, and re-appearing, much to the amusement of each other ; while a guide sits on a floating platform near, ready to lend assistance, or give instruction in natation, if required.

The season, we understood, had been particularly brilliant this year, and was scarcely yet over ; though the ball-room and reading-rooms were less crowded than a few weeks before, when we were told that all that was gay and splendid in France

et l'Etranger was to be seen beneath the striped canopies of the sea-baths of La Rochelle. Certainly a more enjoyable place cannot be found anywhere ; and I was not surprised that anything so rare and really comfortable and agreeable should meet with success. With any of the brilliant *toilettes* which were described to me I did not, however, meet ; as all the bathers I saw were in cloaks and slouch bonnets, and the company we met appeared by no means distinguished ; peasants forming a great proportion. However, the season was nearly over, and one could not expect to see the *élégans* so late ; but I have always observed that the accounts I have heard of the brilliancy of French fashionable meetings are by no means borne out by the reality. At Nérès, at the Monts Dore, and other places, I have been equally disappointed on seeing the manner of French living at watering-places ; but it always appears to me that, except in Paris, there is no attempt at out-of-door style or gaiety anywhere. A solitary equipage, filled with children, met us every day in our walks, and a hired barouche, for the use of the baths, toiled backwards and forwards, hour after hour ; but, except these, we saw no carriages at all, and the walkers were principally tradespeople in smart caps and shawls. One morning, indeed, we were surprised by the sound of musical strains and the appearance of an officer or two on horseback,

followed by a regiment, on their way to exercise ; every man of one company was singing at the top of his voice, joined by the officer who marched in front, and who kept beating time, a very merry song and chorus, which we stopped to listen to, *only a moment*, as the words were not quite so much to be admired as the air. This seemed to us a strange, and not very decorous scene, and was so little in accordance with our ideas of propriety or good taste that we turned away in disgust. However, since it is the custom for officers and men in France to sit together in *cafés*, playing at dominos, drinking wine and beer, and putting no restraint upon their conversation, or acknowledging any superiority, there was nothing extraordinary in the familiarity I had witnessed. How this sort of association can be relished by officers of gentle breeding I cannot conceive ; and many of them must be so, though a great part are men who, having risen from the ranks, have not been accustomed to more refined companionship. If it be true that

“ Strict restraint, once broken, ever balks
Conquest and fame,”

and that it is dangerous for those under command to

“ ——— Swerve

From law, however stern, which tends their strength to nerve,”

it is difficult to comprehend how the French army is regulated.

The next company which followed the vocal party, came hurrying along, helter-skelter, as if no drilling had ever been thought necessary in their military education ; but, while we were remarking the “admired disorder” of their march, we heard their commanding officer’s voice loud in reprobation ; we could scarcely help comparing the whole scene to that which a militia regiment might present in some country town in England : “What are you all about ?” cried the commander ; “Eh, mon Dieu ! One would say it was a flock of sheep instead of a party of soldiers !” This admonition brought them into some order, and they advanced a little less irregularly, but still in as slovenly a manner as could well be conceived. If the French were not known to be good soldiers, one would think this laxity of discipline little likely to make them so ; but they are, like French servants, good enough in their way, though careless in the extreme, and too tenacious to be spoken to.

La Rochelle is a more remarkable town, from the characteristic features it exhibits, than any we had met with since we set out on our tour. Although there is a great deal new in the streets and outskirts, yet much that originally existed remains. For instance, almost the whole centre of the town is built in the same manner : namely, in arcades. These arcades project from the ground-floors, are more or less high and broad, and more or less well

paved ; but they run along uninterruptedly, forming a shelter from sun or rain, as it may happen, and extending along the whole length of the streets on each side. They are generally of stone, with heavy pillars and circular arches, quite without grace or beauty, but peculiar, and giving an Oriental character to the place. In some streets arcades, higher and wider, have been newly erected, which are tolerably ornamental ; but the more antique they are, the lower, narrower, and closer. The Rochellois are very proud of their arcades, boasting that they are, by their means, never kept prisoners or annoyed by either rain or sun ; they forget that these heavy conveniences completely exclude the light in winter from the lower part of their houses, and, confining the air, must make the town damp and unwholesome.

When we first walked along beneath these awnings we found it extremely difficult to distinguish one street from another, and were continually losing ourselves, as they branch off in all directions, with no change of aspect to distinguish them :

“ Each alley has a brother,
And half the *covered way* reflects the other,”

but we got used to them by degrees. There is a sort of *Palais Royal* effect in the pretty shops under the neatest piazzas ; and from the beautiful wooded square, the Place d’Armes, the range which forms one side looks remarkably well. This Place

is peculiarly fine and agreeable; it was formed on the sites of the ancient château, demolished in 1590, of the chapel of St. Anne and its cemetery, of the grand Protestant temple, and the old Hôtel des Monnaies; it, therefore, occupies a large space, and is planted on two sides with fine trees, called the *Bois d'Amourettes*, and closed on the fourth by the cathedral; part of the ramparts of the town, open towards the sea, are behind, and thus a good air is introduced into the square. On moonlight nights it is a charming promenade; for the effects of the sky here are admirable: a range of handsome *cafés* extends along one part, whose lights, gleaming between the trees, have a lively appearance, and the groups of lounging citizens seated under the shades give a life to the scene which the rest of the town does not possess. La Rochelle is, however, infinitely less dull than the generality of French towns; and the quays and shipping, and the constantly-changing sea, prevent it from wearing the sad aspect which distinguishes France in her country places. Notwithstanding all that travellers are in the habit of saying about the liveliness of France, I never can cease to think that it is a dull country; for, except Paris in its season, there is no movement, no activity, no bustle, in its towns, save, now and then, the confusion of market-days. Why England is considered *triste*, either in town or country, I cannot imagine: the brilliancy of

its shops alone, compared to the little dark, dingy cells always met with abroad, even in the most fashionable quarters, might rescue our much-maligned country from the reproach which does not belong to it.

The cathedral of La Rochelle is a modern building ; still unfinished, and possessing no interest : it is very vast, for it stands where once stood the antique church—older than the town itself—of Notre Dame de Cougnes. Here and there, outside, a projecting buttress and part of an arch, built up, betrays its venerable origin ; but, besides this, nothing remains of the original foundation.

At the back of the cathedral we remarked, as we passed through the street, a very large building, with a great many windows, above the portal of which were inscribed the words, *Hôpital M. Auffrédy*. We were puzzled to make out what this could mean, as the hospital was so large and important that it scarcely would appear to be the institution of a private person. Our inquiries gained us no information, and we continued to pass and repass still wondering who this *Monsieur Auffrédy* could be whose name was so conspicuous. When, at length, I found how much interest attached to this place I reproached myself that I should have gone near it without reverence, or have carelessly named its institutor ; whose romantic story is as follows, as near as I have been able to gather it :

STORY OF ALEXANDER AUFFRÉDY.

At the time when the beautiful and wealthy, the admired and accomplished, heiress of Aquitaine, presided over her courts of Love, now in one city of her extensive dominions, now in another, delighting and astonishing the whole troubadour world with her liberality, her taste, her learning, grace, and gaiety, lived, in the city of La Rochelle, a rich merchant, named Alexander Auffrédy, young, handsome, esteemed and envied. His generosity and wealth, added to his personal attractions, made him an object of observation and remark, and it was not long before his name reached the ears of Queen Elionore, who, always desirous to surround herself with all that was gay, brilliant, and distinguished, sent an invitation, or rather a command, to the young merchant to appear at her Court at Poitiers.

Auffrédy went; and but a short time elapsed before he became the favourite of that brilliant circle where beauty and genius reigned triumphant; for it was discovered that his talent for music was of the highest order; his voice, in singing, of rare perfection; his verses full of grace and fire, his manners equal to those of the most finished courtier; and his judgment in the weighty decisions of the courts of Love, sound and good. Even the poets and musicians, who saw him distinguished for the

time above themselves, felt little envy towards him, since they shared his profuse liberality, and were encouraged by his generous admiration, loudly expressed. He was passionately attached to literature, and had so correct a taste that whatever he admired was the best in its kind, and his criticisms were so judicious that not a doubt could remain on the minds of any who listened to his opinion; yet he was never harsh, and, wherever it was possible, showed indulgence; it was only to the presuming and superficial that he was severe; and amongst that class he was by no means beloved; for, after his expressed contempt and censure had laid open to view the faults of many compositions, whose false glare had attracted praise, their authors sunk at once into the obscurity which they deserved.

His chief friends were Bernard de Ventadour, whose lays, mysteriously addressed to *Bel Vizer* and *Conort*, had gained him so much fame; Rudel, the enthusiast, who devoted his life to an imaginary passion; Adhemar and Rambaud d'Aurenge, whose songs were some of the sweetest of their time; and Pierre Rogiers, who sighed his soul away for "*Tort n'avetz;*" and, amongst them all, his poems were held in the greatest esteem. The beautiful and coquettish mistress of the revels was not insensible to his qualities, and was anxious to appropriate him to herself; greedy of praise, and ever desirous of admiration, she used every art to enthrall him, and

to render the passion real, which it was the fashion at her Court to feign, towards herself; but, though flattered and delighted at the preference shown him by her whom all were trying to please, it was not towards the Queen that Auffrédý turned the aspirations of his soul. There was at Court a young and beautiful girl; the orphan of a knight who had fallen in the holy wars, and who was under the guardianship of her uncle, the Baron de Montluçon; she was as amiable in disposition as lovely in person. Auffrédý soon found that his liberty was gone while he gazed upon her, but his modesty prevented his attempting to declare his passion, though in his lays he took occasion to express all the feelings he experienced, and he saw with delight, not only that the charming Beatrix listened with pleased attention when he sung, but was even moved to tears when he uttered the lamentations of an unhappy lover.

Upon one occasion he sang a lay which Queen Elionore imagined was inspired by herself; but which, in reality, he intended should convey to Beatrix his timid passion; it was as follows—in the style of the Eastern poets, then so much imitated and admired:—

L A Y.

“ I only beg a smile from thee
For all this world of tenderness ;
I let no eye my weakness see,
To none my hopes or fears express ;
I never speak thy praises now,
My tongue is mute, and cold my brow.

“ Even like that fabled bird am I
Who loves the radiant orb of night,
Sings on in hopeless melody
And feeds upon her beams of light ;
But never does the planet deign
To pity his unceasing pain.”

As he sung he would observe the eyes of Beatrix fixed on him with a tender expression ; but their meaning was still obscure ; for her thoughts appeared pre-occupied, and it might be more the sentiment than the author which attracted her.

Just at this time he was suddenly astounded by the information, that the uncle of her he loved had announced his intention of marrying her to a man of noble lineage and great wealth, and Auffrédy woke from his dream of happiness at once. His strains were now all gloom and sadness, and Elionore heard, with something like astonishment, the melancholy and despairing lays, to which alone he tuned the harp that all delighted to hear. Beatrix, too, whose wishes had not been consulted on a subject so important to herself, appeared quite changed from the time the tidings first reached her ; and her pale cheek and starting tears proved too plainly her aversion to the proposed union. Still did she linger near when Auffrédy sung ; and when, in a passion of sorrow, he poured forth the lay here given, Beatrix betrayed an emotion for which he feared to account.

L A Y.

“ Like that fair tree whose tender boughs
Wave in the sunshine green and bright,
Nor bird nor insect e'er allows
To seek its shelter morn or night,
My heart was young, and fresh, and free,
And near it came nor care nor pain ;
But now, like that same tender tree,
When once rude hands its fruit profane,
Ill-omen'd birds and shapes of ill
Troop to its branches, crowding still,—
And sorrows never known till now
Have cast their shadows on my brow :
A ruin is my heart become
Where brooding sadness finds a home ;
See—those bright leaves fall, one by one,
And I—my latest hopes are gone !”

This was the last time he had ever an opportunity of pouring forth his feelings in the presence of Beatrix ; for she disappeared suddenly from Court, and, to the amazement of all, it was announced by her uncle, that her vocation for a religious life had been so decidedly manifested, that he had yielded to her entreaties, and permitted her to enter a convent.

This news made a strange impression on the mind of Auffrédy,—could it be possible, after all, that she loved him ? yet, he argued, even if it were so, it was evident that her pride of birth had overcome her preference, and she had sacrificed the

feelings of her heart rather than descend to be the bride of a merchant, who, though wealthy beyond all the nobles of the land, was yet no match for one born in her exalted rank. From that time the troubadour sang no more ; and as the Queen found he had no longer incense to lay on her shrine, her preference for him waned away, and he found that the permission he asked, to absent himself from her Court was not withheld. “ Poor Auffrédy,” said Elionore, somewhat contemptuously, as he departed ; “ he has seen a wolf and has lost the use of speech ; let him go, we have many a young poet who can well replace him.”

The admired favourite of a capricious beauty accordingly returned to La Rochelle, changed in heart and depressed in spirits. “ And this, then,” he mused, “ is the reward which the world offers to genius, taste, truth, and feeling ! and this is all the value set on qualities which excite admiration, enthusiasm, rapture !—a brief season suffices to weary the most zealous and devoted—a few months, and that which was deemed wit and talent, and wisdom and grace, is looked upon as flat, tame, and unworthy attention. As long as vanity is pleased, and novelty excites new ideas, the poet is welcomed and followed ; but, let sadness or sorrow overtake him, of all his admirers not one friend remains ! How childish is the thirst for such trivial fame as that a poet gains ! It is like the pursuit of the gos-

samer, which the least breath sweeps away. I will sing no more. I will forget the brilliant scenes that have bewildered me too long ; but to what do I now return ? Alas ! I have no longer a relish for that which interested me before—to what end do I seek to gain wealth ? for whom should I hoard treasure ? I shall in future take no interest in my successes ; all appears a blank to me, and my existence a cold, monotonous state of being. These heaps of gold that fill my coffers are worthless in my eyes ; these crowding sails that return to harbour, bringing me ceaseless wealth, are fraught only with care. Why was I born rich, since I must live alone and unblest !”

Still he could not help, in spite of his professions of indifference, being flattered by the manner in which his return to his native town was celebrated. The bells of the churches sounded to welcome him, the young girls of the villages round, came out, in their holiday costumes, to greet him on his way, they strewed flowers in his path and sang verses in his praise : the people of La Rochelle even went so far as to offer prayers at the shrine of the Virgin, to thank Heaven for restoring to them so honoured and beloved a citizen. Full of gratitude for all this kindness and affection, Auffrédy bestowed liberal presents upon all : he presented dowers to several of the young maidens who were foremost in doing him honour : he gave large sums to the town, to

be laid out in charities and in erecting new buildings, and he sent donations to the churches and convents. His mind was calmed, and his heart touched when he saw in what esteem he was held. "It is something yet," said he, "to gain the goodwill of one's fellow-men, and to witness their attachment. Wealth is certainly a blessing, since it enables one to show gratitude."

About this period great preparations were being made for an expedition to the Holy Land, which was to be led by young Prince Henry, the heir of Aquitaine, Normandy, and England; and all the lords and knights of the three countries vied with each other in splendid equipments. They borrowed money in all directions, and, amongst those who were capable of lending, it was not likely that the rich merchant of La Rochelle would be forgotten. On the contrary, from numerous quarters came applications for assistance; even Queen Elionore condescended to request that he would contribute to the splendour of those who should accompany her son, and the generous and ever ready hand of Auffrédy was employed from morning till night, in lending and giving to those whose means did not keep pace with their desires. Still, therefore, did he repeat to himself that wealth had its advantages, as he cheerfully dispensed his benefits on all sides. At length he was fairly obliged to desist, for his liberality had brought him to the end of his stores,

and he could not but smile, as he remarked to a friend that, if he did not expect in a few weeks the return of all his vessels which were trading in the East, and regularly brought back increased wealth at every voyage, he should be a poor man. "I have nothing left now," said he, "but my plate and jewels, and the furniture of my house; and, should my fleet delay, I will sell all rather than a single knight should be kept from joining the glorious expedition."

As if he had foreseen the event, it so happened: although there were no storms to prevent it, the return of the expected vessels was indeed delayed, and, fresh and pressing applications pouring in upon him, Auffrédy found himself actually under the necessity of disposing of his personal possessions, in order to advance the ready-money required.

He was now in a novel position, without money altogether, and he had sold all he possessed of land and houses. "It matters not," said he to the friend at whose house he was staying, at his earnest and affectionate entreaty; "in a day or two I shall have more than I ever yet could call my own; for my last advices, brought by a pilgrim from the country of Manchou Khan, tell me, that all my ventures have been successful, and that this time my faithful agent, Herbert de Burgh, has excelled himself in ability."

"And even should it not be so," said his friend,

“ think you that the grateful town of La Rochelle would not be proud to support for years, nay, for ever, if need were, the benefactor to whom every citizen is more or less indebted ? ”

“ I doubt it not,” returned the merchant, “ and it would be even a gratification to me to be reduced to poverty, which such generous friends would relieve.”

But a great and most unexpected change was about to take place in the fortunes of Auffrédy : a change which neither he nor his friends had ever contemplated, and which put quite a different face upon everything. The fleet from the East did not arrive. Day after day, week after week, month after month, the first, the second, year had passed, and the chain at the harbour of La Rochelle was not loosened to give passage to his vessels. Hope had slowly faded, expectation declined, and, at length, expired,—and the powerful, wealthy, and beloved Auffrédy was a beggar.

Where was he at the expiration of the second year ? What friend’s mansion did he still honour with his presence, and which of his admirers was made happy by seeing him partake of his hospitality ? Who, of all those he had rescued from poverty, danger, and affliction, was so blest as to show how strong the tide of gratitude swelled in their hearts ? Auffrédy was heard of no more ! His native town had forgotten his name : to speak

of him was interdicted; he was a reproach to La Rochelle, a disgrace to the city whom his misfortune left without a merchant able to assist monarchs and fit out armies. Every individual felt injured, every one resented his affront. Not a door but was closed against the bankrupt spendthrift—the deceiver who spoke of wealth which was but a vision, who encouraged hopes which had no foundation. Vessel after vessel arrived from different quarters, but none had met with Herbert de Burgh or his charge; it was doubtful if he had ever even sailed: it was possible, nay probable, indeed it soon was received as a certainty, that the fleet which was talked of had no existence but in the crazed imagination of a profuse dreamer, who fancied argosies and made the world believe he possessed them. It was enough that the drama was ended, and no one cared now, after so long a time, to ask what was become of the principal actor.

One bright summer morning, when the sun shone with dazzling lustre on the dancing waves outside the harbour of La Rochelle, and, inside, the water was as calm as glass, a little fishing-boat came gliding along, her red sail gleaming in the light. She was guided by a single sailor—a young man whose remarkably handsome face and figure was little set off by his rough habiliments, which were of the meanest kind; indeed, his boat and all belonging to it indicated little wealth, and

seemed to have seen, like himself, much service ; but there was a cheerful sparkle in his speaking eye which spoke of content and happiness ; and, as he leaped on shore and prepared to unload his little cargo of fish, his animated manner and quick and ready movements showed that, if he were poor, he gained enough by his industry to support himself, and cared for nothing but the present moment, without concerning himself for the future. He had arrived but a few minutes when a slight woman, wrapped in a long black cloak, with the peaked hood tightly drawn over her head and quite concealing her face, emerged from a neighbouring street, and, bounding forward, stood by the side of the young man, who, with a joyful exclamation, caught her in his arms, and embraced her tenderly. Together they collected the fish, which filled his boat, into baskets, and placed them on the edge of the path where frequenters of the markets must pass, and before long their little stock was sold, and they were in possession of a small sum of money, which the young fisherman put into his purse with an air of satisfaction, as, fastening his boat to the shore, and gathering up his baskets, he gave his arm to the girl, who apparently was his wife, and they left the quay. Just as they were entering the small narrow Rue de la Vache, they observed, standing under an archway, a man, of ragged and miserable appearance, who, approaching, offered to be the bearer of their baskets

to their home ; he spoke in a low, hollow voice, and said, " Employ me: it will be a charity; I have not tasted bread these two days." Although the young couple, linked arm in arm, close together, and looking in each other's eyes, were talking in gay, cheerful accents, and, apparently, exclusively occupied with each other, yet there was something so sad, so desolate, in the tone of the poor man's voice who addressed them, that they both stopped and turned towards him. " Good friend," said the young man, " you seem in great straits; the blessed Virgin knows I am little able to help you; but take the baskets my wife is carrying, though you look but ill able to bear them. We live hard by, and we have a morsel of bread to give you, if you will." The man made no reply, but took the burthen from the young woman and followed the merry pair, who resumed their talk and their cheerful laugh as they went on. " I need not go out again for at least three days," said the husband, " since this venture has been so lucky; you see how well we can live, and how happy one can be, after all, on nothing." " Yes," answered the wife; " but, at least, while the weather is so fine, I see no reason why I should be left at home. I could be so useful in the boat, and it would make me so happy. I know when it blows hard, it is useless to ask you, but now"— " Well, you shall go, dearest, next time, if this lasts," was the answer; " what a good sailor you

will make, as well as a housekeeper !” They both laughed, and at this moment they reached the door of a very humble dwelling, with only just furniture enough to prevent its being called empty ; but they stepped into it, and, the porter placing the baskets on the floor, they sat down and invited him to do the same, while they shared with him a cake and some water, which was already placed on a table.

The poor man, after eating a morsel, appeared suddenly faint, and, uttering a deep sigh, fell on the ground motionless : they raised him up, and, with the utmost kindness, endeavoured to restore him : his worn and haggard countenance told of long and hard suffering ; his white hair, that hung in matted locks on his shoulders, seemed blanched by misery, not age ; for he appeared a young man, and his emaciated hands were white and more delicate than is usual in his station. After some time he recovered a little, and, thanking them for their help, attempted to rise and leave the house ; but both, moved with compassion, insisted on his lying down on their only bed and taking some repose. “ You are ill,” said the husband, “ and have been too long without food—rest quiet—we will get you some more suitable nourishment, and when you are better, we will hear of your leaving us.”

From that day the sick man remained a guest with these poor people, till, his illness increasing, he begged they would procure him admittance into

some hospital, if possible, that he might cease to be a burthen on their benevolence : finding their means running very short, owing to the uncertain success of the fisherman's trade, they consented to attempt getting him admitted to the hospital established by the monks of St. Julien, who kindly received the unfortunate man : but, not content with doing this, it was agreed between the young couple that, during the husband's absence, the wife should be his nurse, and attend to him while in the asylum which was afforded him. For several weeks he lay, apparently, at the point of death ; but after that time began to recover, and, though weak and emaciated, appeared to have escaped danger. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to attempt it, he resumed the occupation of porter on the quay, which his sickness had interrupted, and, as he grew daily in strength and health, he was able to gain a little, which he insisted on adding to the small stock of the charitable persons who had saved his life by their kindness. Sometimes he accompanied the husband on his expeditions, and was serviceable to him in his perilous ventures, for his nautical knowledge seemed great, and his skill and readiness made themselves apparent. Though full of gratitude in all his actions, he never expressed in words the feelings their conduct naturally inspired : he was silent and thoughtful, and seemed labouring under some overwhelming grief which no consola-

tions could soften : he never spoke of any person in the town, nor seemed to know anything belonging to it, by which they judged he was a stranger ; but, as he evidently did not desire to be communicative, they never urged him with questions, nor required to be informed of his former life. It sufficed to them that he was unfortunate, and that they had ameliorated his condition, and all three lived together, happy and content, without knowing any circumstances of each other's previous condition.

Several months passed in this manner, winters and summers fled away, and the returning seasons found them still poor, still labouring, and still content. The porter improved, not only in strength, but in spirits ; for he felt that he was able to be of service to those who had befriended him, and the gloom which chained his tongue and clouded his brow, wore, in a great degree, away. They had no friends in the town, nor sought for acquaintances ; the young woman always concealed her face when she went out, which she never did, but to meet her husband, or to buy necessities for their simple household. His boat had been replaced by one larger and more commodious, and his gains were greater ; by degrees their circumstances improved, and, as they sat by their fireside, they were accustomed to say that they were rich enough, and desired nothing more.

Although the fisherman and his now constant

companion had been out in all weathers, they had never yet encountered any dangerous storms, and the wife was now quite tranquil, from the constant habit of seeing them return safely, and complaining little. One day, in early spring, they had set out with a clear sky and fair wind, and had had one of the most fortunate voyages of any they had yet made on the Breton coast, when, just as they were within sight of the Point de Ray, which raises its bare and jagged head three hundred feet above the noisy waves which brawl at its base, an ominous cloud suddenly overspread the heavens, and the symptoms of a coming storm were but too apparent. With silent awe the solitary mariners beheld, sailing heavily along the darkening sky, two birds, of sable plumage, whose flight seemed directed towards the fatal Baie des Trépassés, so often the grave of the adventurous seaman. "Alas!" said the young husband, as he marked their flight, "those birds bode no good: they are the souls of King Grallon and his daughter, who appear always before a storm; if we escape the perils of the Isle de Sein, we shall be indeed fortunate."

"Is this coast, then, indeed, so dangerous?" asked the porter.

"It is the abode of spirits," answered the young man; "and was the cradle of Merdynn the Bard; the city where he lived, is engulfed below those black rocks yonder, whose spires, like those of

churches, are only visible when destruction threatens those who are found on the coast. We have, hitherto, been fortunate in all our undertakings; but there must come an evil day, which generally arrives when one is least prepared."

"It is too true," said his companion; "for me, I thought all my misfortunes were past, and death alone could be the ill left to reach me. I have, of late, felt it *would* be an ill since I have lived again in you and yours—before that time, I prayed for it in vain."

A furious gust of wind at this instant swept past them, their frail vessel shook in every timber, and, mounting on a sweeping wave that came howling along, was sent forward with frightful impetuosity to a great distance; when, as if the angry billow disdained its weight, it was precipitated into a gulf of foam which dashed above the sunken rocks whose points received it. "Oh, Beatrix!" exclaimed the young fisherman; "it is all over; we shall meet no more; our fate has overtaken us at last! My friend," he added, grasping the arm of his companion; "if you survive, promise to protect her. We have suffered much, and borne our fortune as we could. I have brought this wretchedness upon her by my love; but neither she nor I have ever repented the lot we chose. She will tell you our story, and you will continue to comfort and support her when I am no more."

“Be not cast down,” answered his friend; as, buffeted by the storm, they clung together to the creaking mast; “I know your story already, and have known it from the first. You are the troubadour, Anselm, once the ornament of the Court of Elionore, and Beatrix de Montluçon is your devoted wife. She was said to have died in the convent of St. Blaise, and you to have perished in the Holy Land.”

The shrieking of the wind, and the roaring of the awakened thunder, drowned the reply of the young man: a crash, a shock, and their boat was split into several parts; they each clung to a piece of wreck, and used every effort to overcome the fury of the elements. Anselm’s hold, however, was suddenly loosened by the falling of the mast upon his arm, and his friend saw him no more for several instants; he re-appeared, however, and a returning wave dashed him on a rock, which the porter reaching by a spring, he caught him by the hand and dragged him to the summit. There they stood clasping each other, and expecting every moment to be washed off by the boiling surge. For some time they, nevertheless, kept their stand, and, though not a vestige of their boat was to be seen, they still lived and still hoped, for their hopes rose with the danger, and, as they offered up their fervent prayers to the Mother of mercy, they felt not altogether abandoned. All night were they in this perilous position, hearing the waters around them howling,

and climbing to reach the spot where, almost by miracle, they were placed. Day broke, and with morning came a brightened prospect; by degrees the sea sank, the winds subsided, and all trace of the storm was gone. But their situation seemed still little better than before; must they not perish on this barren rock, without food or shelter, if not washed off by the next tide, which might bring back the sleeping vengeance of the enraged elements? While they hung exhausted on the perilous edge of the peak, something in the distance caught their view. It grew more distinct; it came nearer; and they were aware that a sail was passing: not one, however, but many; like the glittering of the wings of a flight of sea-birds, sail after sail hove in sight, and a gallant fleet came full in view almost as soon as they had descried the first.

Loud and long were their cries; hope gave them fresh force, and their voices were sent over the now quiet waves, echoing till they reached the ears of those in the foremost vessel.

The mariners, directed by the continued sound of distress, were able to steer towards them; and having at length discovered in the specks at a distance, amidst the waves, the unfortunate friends, a boat was sent through the sea to the rock, and at once received the rescued pair. They were taken on board and tended carefully; and, the wind being fair, the vessels continued their course, which they

declared was to La Rochelle, much to the delight of those they had delivered from death.

The port so much desired was almost reached ; and the high towers of the Château de Vaclair, of the cathedral, and the Grosse Tour de la Chaine, shone boldly forth against the clear blue sky. The captain walked the deck, and gazed long and anxiously forth ; every now and then tears started into his eyes, which he brushed away ; at length his feelings appeared to overcome him, and, burying his face in his hands, he sobbed aloud. The two grateful friends whom he had saved were standing by ; he raised his head and addressed them ; “ You who are of La Rochelle,” said he, “ can you not, perchance, tell me if one whom I left ten years ago in that town still lives and is well ? Fears and forebodings oppress me as I approach the shore, for it is long since I have heard tidings of him, and much does it import me to know that he exists, and that my enforced absence has not caused him misfortune. Is the great merchant, Alexander Auffrédy, still, as he once was, the ornament and benefactor of his native town ? ”

“ Alas ! ” replied the youngest of the shipwrecked men, “ you ask after one long since forgotten in La Rochelle. It is now ten years since he was a ruined man, and, having nothing more to give to his ungrateful fellow-citizens, was abandoned to his fate, and has been no more heard of.”

“ Unhappy destiny !” cried the captain, turning pale and clasping his hands ; “ but he was rich, and his stores were immense ; not twice ten years’ absence of his fleets could have caused him to become bankrupt.”

“ But he gave all he had to the knights bound for the Holy Wars ; his agent, Herbert de Burgh, was either faithless, or the fleets entrusted to him were lost ; he never returned from his last voyage to the East, and the unfortunate merchant, reduced to penury and driven to despair, is said to have destroyed himself.” As Anselm uttered these words the captain became convulsed with agony ; his face was livid, his eyes rolled, his teeth were clenched. “ Wretch that I am !” cried he ; “ who am the cause of all ! I wrote to my dear master and told him of my intention to attempt a new discovery in a new world filled with riches unheard of before ; but I waited not his permission ; I set out without his leave, and, not content with what I had already gained for him, I resolved to seek more wealth ; to what end have I gained it—to what end have I returned with riches enough to purchase Europe ; all of which these vessels bear, if he, the generous, trusting, kind, indulgent, and deceived owner is no more ? Where shall I hide my head ?—where lose my shame ?—and how survive his loss !”

They entered the harbour of La Rochelle ; and as

the gallant train of ships swept proudly along, the whole population of the town came forth until they lined the shores in every direction. It was soon known, by the ensigns they bore, that they were the long-lost vessels of Auffrédy; and many a conscious cheek turned pale, and many an eye glared with amazement as the gorgeous galleys covered the waters.

But the captain was lying prone on the deck; his face was haggard, his look wild, and he tore his hair in distraction. "My master, my poor master!" cried he; "I have murdered thee by my mercenary wickedness; oh, holy Virgin! forgive me, for I am a sinner!" "Look up, Herbert de Burgh," said a voice beside him; "the Mother of mercy is never appealed to in vain; she can restore the dead to life; she can, though late, re-illumine joy in the heart; she can revive long-abandoned hope. Look up and say if in this wretched, wasted, meagre form you can recognise one whom you loved; one who loved and trusted you with reason; who never doubted your integrity, and who mourned you lost more than all his wealth, which you restore!"

Herbert de Burgh looked up and beheld, leaning over him, the form of Alexander Auffrédy.

A few words sufficed of explanation: joy took the place of despair, exultation of tears, and the minstrel, Anselm, heard, with feelings of emotion difficult to describe, that the wretched man whom

he had saved from starvation was the rich merchant of La Rochelle.

Loud and joyous were the notes of triumph which sounded from every vessel as the news became known; the clarions and trumpets rent the air; wild exclamation of happiness and congratulation rose above the pealing music which ushered in the fleet to its haven; and strange was the revulsion of feeling on shore when the despised porter stepped from his boat, attended by Herbert de Burgh, who proclaimed him as his master.

Those who had shunned and injured the now wealthy merchant were astounded; and who were there, amongst the whole population, who had befriended him, or who deserved aught but contempt and hatred at his hands? There was *but one*, and she is clasped in her husband's arms, and sees, in the man she had protected, her lover, whose songs she had so often sung to her husband!

Auffrédy kept their secret, and to none but himself was it ever known that the rich man who afterwards became governor of La Rochelle, and his beautiful wife, supposed to be a native of some foreign land, were the troubadour, Anselm, and Beatrix of Montluçon.

All the revenge Auffrédy took upon his townsmen was to reject their offers of friendship, to refuse to take his place amongst them, and to avoid appearing in their sight. The bulk of his great wealth

was dedicated to the foundation of a hospital for naval and military patients, and the rest of his days he passed in attendance on the sick.

This is the story of Auffrédy, the great merchant, the Jacques Cœur of the thirteenth century ; and this is the history of the magnificent Hospital of La Rochelle, which he founded, and which is to be seen at the present hour, the most conspicuous object in the town.

CHAPTER XI.

TOWERS—RELIGION—MARIA BELANDELLE—STORM—PROTESTANT
RETREAT—SOLEMN DINNERS—"HALF-AND-HALF"—GO TO
SLEEP!—THE BREWERY—GAS ESTABLISHMENT—CHÂTEAU OF
LA FONT—THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED—TRIUMPH OF SCENERY
OVER APPETITE—SLAVE TRADE—CHARLES LE BIEN SERVI—
LIBERALITY OF LOUIS PHILIPPE—GUITON—HOUSE OF LE MAIRE
GUITON—THE FLEETS—THE FIGHT—THE MAYOR AND THE
GOVERNOR.

It appears that, from the position of the town of La Rochelle, it was not difficult for the vessels of an enemy to reach its walls, and even to penetrate its harbour; the latter was formed outside the town, and the access to it was by numerous gates. The entrance, nevertheless, was defended by two towers, which still exist, if not in all their original strength, yet exhibiting an aspect of defiance, and recalling recollections of times long past, such as few towns in France can now do. These towers, which stand, like Sir Bevis and Sir Ascapart, bold and menacing, and forbidding the entrance to any but a friend, are called La Tour de la Chainé and La Tour de St. Nicolas.

The first is a rugged, round tower of great height and bulk, apparently of Roman construc-

tion ; it was formerly called La Petite Tour de la Chaine, because it assisted its opposite sister, La Grosse Tour, to sustain the enormous chain which still, on occasion, closes the mouth of the harbour. The latter is now called St. Nicolas, and presents a most extraordinary and *old world* appearance : higher than the first, its form is so irregular, that it would be difficult to decide what shape it could be called : round on one side, square on another, with little round, square, and octagon turrets rising out of it, the whole mass has the strangest effect imaginable. Within it is just as mysterious, having chambers built up and down, and communicating with each other in the most unexpected manner, so that the whole interior is a perfect labyrinth of galleries, cells, hiding-places, and rooms on different stages. This is just the sort of tower which seemed fitted for that inscrutable tyrant, Louis XI. ; who wrote upon one of the windows, with a diamond, these words : “ *O la grande Folie !* ” alluding, it was believed, to what he considered his weakness, in having abandoned Guienne to his brother.

The fortifications of La Rochelle were very extensive formerly, the gates numerous. La Porte Malvaut or Mauléon, La Porte Rambaud, du Petit Comte, de St. Nicolas, de Vérité, des Canards, de Mauclair, de la Vieille Poterie, de la Grande Rue du Port, de la Petit Rue du Port, de Pérot and du Pont-Vert, tell their age by their antique names. There

are but few vestiges of any of these gates, except that of Cougnes, of the ancient Porte Neuve, and la Porte Maubec : but, besides all these, there are seven still existing. To complete the defences, there were formerly, *without* the gates, two forts of great strength, one called St. Louis and Des Deux Moulins, the ruins of which still exist near the fine pyramidal Tour de la Lanterne, the most conspicuous of all, now used as a prison, which raises its head far above every tower and spire of La Rochelle, and which must show its *pharos* at a great distance at sea. The architecture of this tower is remarkable, and its ornaments very beautiful : the spire that sustains its lantern is like that of a church adorned with graceful foliage to the top : it dates from 1445, and has been repaired at different periods. Medals were struck at the time of the siege, in 1628, which represent this tower, having the following motto round :—*Lucerna impiorum extinguetur* (the light of the impious shall be extinguished). It was at this time that Cardinal Richelieu caused the great *digue*, as it is called, to be made to the south-west of the town, with enormous labour and expense, in order to prevent supplies reaching the Rochellois who held out against him. At low water this *digue* is visible, and remains a memorial of the cruelty and harshness of the tyrant priest who ruled France.

One of the numerous towers which formerly protected the town is called the Demi-bastion *des*

Dames, so named from its having been defended by the ladies of La Rochelle, whose heroic devotion at the time of the siege by the duke of Anjou, in 1573, has rendered them famous in history. They were not less active half a century later, when, for thirteen months, La Rochelle withstood the united forces of Catholic France bent on its destruction. The scenes which took place at these periods have made this interesting town classic ground : there is not a wall, a tower, or a street, which has not some tale of heroism attached to it, and some noble trait may be recounted as having occurred in every quarter.*

There are no interesting churches in La Rochelle, the wars of religion having destroyed all the antique buildings of worship, both Catholic and Protestant. Nothing now remains of the extensive possessions of the Templars, or the Knights of Malta, who both had *commanderies* here.

The reformed religion, of which La Rochelle afterwards became the stronghold, is said to have been first introduced by a young girl of humble station, Maria Belandelle, into this part of the country. Strong in her conviction, and anxious to spread the truth, this person, more zealous than prudent, ventured to come forward, in 1534, as antagonist to, and disputant against, a Franciscan

* In the Romance of the Queen Mother, I have given a detailed account, from the most correct chroniclers, of the siege of La Rochelle, and its defence, in 1573.

friar. However good her arguments might be, the result of the controversy had of course been previously decided on by the strongest party. She was convicted of heresy and impiety, and condemned to the stake; which *righteous* judgment was carried into effect, and poor Marie was publicly burnt in the great square, to the refreshment and edification of her *soi-disant* fellow-Christians!

Calvinism, however, gained ground in spite of this example of its dangers, and many were the secret meetings held in concealed places; sometimes under-ground, like the early Christians; till in 1558 a minister, previously a priest of the diocese of Agen, named David, preached in the church of St. Barthélemi (ominous name!) the new doctrines, in the presence of the King and Queen of Navarre, parents of Henry IV. A few years later, under these powerful auspices, other ministers ventured to emerge from their hiding-places, and proclaim the "glad tidings" to their brethren. With more or less danger and indulgence, the Protestants pursued their reform for some time—now persecuted, now permitted—till, by the edict of pacification of 1570, it was agreed that persons of both religions should in future *live together in good intelligence*. The immortal horrors of St. Bartholomew, however, changed the face of things, and a long struggle ensued; during which, at different times, the Rochellois showed themselves undaunted defenders of the faith.

Always opposed and persecuted, the Protestants were never publicly allowed, by the State, to follow the exercise of their religion, till the great revolution swept away all barriers ; and, from that time alone, those who professed that faith could do so openly. Several houses are shown in the town where the Calvinists were accustomed to meet secretly, and to one of them an accident introduced us.

Every morning before breakfast we were accustomed to go down to the baths of the beautiful *Mail*, and as the walk through the town, under the interminable arcades, was both hot and tedious, we always chose a longer, but very agreeable, way, by the boulevards of the ancient ramparts ; which are extremely pleasant, varied, and delightful, offering here and there fine views of the country beneath, and affording thick shade under their magnificent trees ; some of the best houses open at the back on these ramparts, from whence their fine gardens, full of flowers and vine-trellices, can be occasionally seen. We had been a week at La Rochelle ; every morning enjoying our walk, for the weather was perfection, a warm, bright sun and fresh sea-breeze inspiriting us to take so very long a promenade twice a day, in order that we might lose nothing of the splendour of the sea. One day the sun deceived us ; we set out as usual ; but had not got half to the end of the ramparts, when a series of dark clouds came creeping over the

blue sky ; a hollow wind began to sigh amongst the leaves, and the light became fitful and lurid, till, on a sudden, a loud crack in the sky was heard, and in an instant down rushed the rain in a perfect deluge. We had reached the most exposed part of the boulevard ; all the trees here were young ; indeed, as we observed the quick flashes of lightning, we were scarcely sorry to be at a distance from the larger ones. We stood close to the old wall, and covering ourselves with our parasols as well as we could, paused, hoping the fury of the storm would soon subside. We were wet through instantly ; for it seemed as if the Spirits of the shower took a pleasure in drenching us without mercy ; such a roaring, and creaking, and flashing echoed around us, that it was impossible not to fancy they were enjoying our distress. Finding that there was no chance of the storm abating, we determined to continue our way, and, by getting into the streets, escape the danger of the lightning ; accordingly, at the first opening, which was near the Ecluse de la Verdière, we hurried down ; but here the storm-fiend became so furious, the wind so terrific, and the rain so persevering, that, seeing an open door, we darted into it, and in an instant found ourselves under shelter. When we could breathe we looked round, and could not help laughing to see where we had been so lucky as to place ourselves. It was a huge dark cavern, where

coals and other fuel were heaped in all directions ; long aisles seemed to diverge from it with low arches leading further into the building, and apparently descending. A small, pointed window at the back just gave light enough to show its retreats, and we became convinced that this was one of the very places where of old our Protestant brethren were accustomed to meet to exercise their religion. It answered precisely to a description I had read of one of them, situate beneath the ramparts, and it was a great comfort in our emergency to think that we had thus discovered a secret haunt which must otherwise have escaped us.

The owner of the shed, or a workman, soon arrived, and seemed somewhat amused, as well as astonished, to see how we had taken possession of his grot ; we had not Imogen's excuse—

“ Before I entered here I called ;”

but he gave us welcome, nevertheless, till the storm disappearing, as suddenly as it had arrived, we were able to pick our way home to Les Trois Chandeliers.

One of the least agreeable things which we encountered in our inn, was the manner in which our dinners were conducted ; we were not allowed the privilege, which we generally claimed, of dining in our own apartments ; but were given to understand that at the *table d'Hôte* we should meet

with the best attendance and entertainment. Accordingly, we became guests in the fine *salon* I have before described, where a party were assembled in solemn silence, as if a serious meeting, instead of one somewhat lively, was on the *tapis*. The cross-looking, silent damsel of the huge square cap slowly placed the dishes on the table, and every one sat down ; but not a single individual, male or female, attempted to help his neighbour to anything ; not a word was spoken, except in whispers ; and very soon she of the square cap began to remove several of the untouched viands ; as the soup, for which we had ventured to ask, was particularly bad, we did not interfere to prevent this proceeding. The next course appeared ; but still, except a solitary individual, who made a desperate move, and cut up a fowl which he handed round, no one put out a finger ; as we were quite at the lower end of the table, and saw with consternation that our appetites, sharpened with the fine air of the sea, were not likely to be satisfied, and not relishing this Governor Sancho's fare, we beckoned to a mute female, who had entered with the second course, and stood by as if a spectator of the solemnity, and remonstrated on the absurdity, entreating to have something brought us ; she answered gravely, that *in our turn* we should be attended to ; and in the end we were fortunate enough to procure a little cream, of which we took possession ; and then,

wearied out with the tedium of the proceeding, rose and made a retreat, leaving the rest of the taciturn company to wait for and contemplate their dessert. It was not so much the supineness of the attendants as the apathy of the guests that amazed us; having generally observed in France, that *mauvaise honte* by no means stood in the way of hungry persons, and that a French appetite is with difficulty appeased, even after partaking of every dish on the table: a fact of which we had lately been reminded at Poitiers, where a set of men, who ate in a most prodigious manner, after the last condiment had disappeared exclaimed, one to the other, "*Eh, mon Dieu! on ne fait que commencer, il me semble.*"

Our desertion being reported to the lady of the Three Candlesticks, she came to apologise; fearing that her enforced absence had caused something to go wrong at the dinner. She told us that she was obliged to attend to the domestic arrangements of her hotel, and to superintend fifteen workmen who were busied in some necessary duties; but, *as she always saw to everything herself*, we should have no cause to complain another day. We had meditated finding out another place to dine at, but this disarmed us; and, day after day, we were obliged to submit to something very similar, being forced to make a perfect struggle for our dinner, and submit to the studiously tedious movements of

the Breton girl, whose frowns and scowls accompanied every action. We found, one day, a champion in an old gentleman, who, a stranger and traveller, like ourselves, endeavoured to create a reform; but was only partially successful. This person had been to England, and preserved pleased recollections of London "*half-and-half*," which he seemed to consider little short of nectar, and was astonished at my ignorance when, appealed to, I was obliged to plead guilty of not being acquainted with its virtues. He was the first Frenchman I ever heard refute the calumnies against our climate; for, though he agreed that we had fogs in London occasionally somewhat denser than in Paris, he had not fallen into the error,—which it is thought heresy to dispute,—that, at Brighton, Richmond, or Windsor, the blue sky is never seen. A very supercilious man who sat near him, annoyed at his praises of England, and his raptures at the Tunnel,—that great object of foreign admiration,—endeavoured to silence him by pronouncing that London had no monuments, and was not half as big as Paris; for, though he lived in Poitou, he had seen the capital. The comic look which our champion gave us when this oracle was pronounced was irresistible.

We had inquired for the fountain and castle of La Font, famous in the annals of the Liege; and our hostess, finding that we were bent on seeing

all the sights that La Rochelle could furnish, when she met us one morning at her door, where we had been greeted by her husband, who officiated as cook in the dark retreat which we had to cross on our exit, with the salutation of "*Go to sleep ;*"—which English phrase he considered as expressive as any other,—proposed to show us the way to the village of La Font, and its château—a short walk from La Rochelle. We accepted her offer ; and, accompanied by her little girl—a forward, clever child of about seven years old, and two friends,—in one of whom we recognised one of the solemn officials of the dinner-table, who, it seems, was playing only an amateur part on that occasion,—we set out. The ideas of all French people, in every part of France, it appears to me, are the same respecting sights and views : to take a walk means, with them, to put on your best gown and cap, take your umbrella, and proceed, at a sauntering pace, talking all the way, down some hot, dusty road, where the *monde* is expected to be met with. The end of the journey is usually at some shabby cottage, or *cabaret*, where seats are set out in the sun, and refreshments are to be had. I think lanes and meadow-paths do not exist in France ; or, if they do, they are carefully avoided by all but shepherds and shepherdesses, who are obliged to take them occasionally ; but who much prefer, as do their charges, the sheep and cows, the high road, all dust and bustle.

The first place we stopped at, we were assured, was very interesting : the permission to see it had been graciously granted to our hostess, for us, by the proprietor, who usually dined at the *table d'hôte*,—one of our silent *companions*, no doubt ; —and we could, consequently, do no less than appear grateful for the favour. Our patience was, however, put to the test when what we hoped, by its ruinous appearance, would turn out an antique church or tower was announced to be an infant *brewery*, in a very early stage of its existence. We stood by while our companions talked to a very pretty, indolent-looking woman, surrounded by black-eyed children, whose ages and habits were dilated on, and all of whom were scattered about the premises—sitting or lying on tubs and heaps of wood ; while the husband and father sauntered through something like work, which was to bring the erection, in the course of time, to a close. He seemed glad of an opportunity of leaving off what he was supposed to be doing, to show us the garden of the establishment,—a wilderness full of mignonette, and cabbages, and vines, and pumpkins.

As an excuse for the failure of this sight, we were told that the principal works could not be shown, which, had we seen, would have amazed us not a little ; but, to make up for the disappointment, we should be introduced to another *fabrique*,

which should well repay us. When near the Porte Dauphine, we found this treat was no other than a gas establishment; and, terrified at the odour which spread from it far and wide, which, added to the heat of a very sunny day, warned us to forego the temptation of becoming acquainted with the method of meting out gas to the town of La Rochelle, we protested against being forced to enter; contenting ourselves with admiring the tall pillar, which, being new, is an object of great exultation to the inhabitants. The air, in this part, was quite poisoned with the effluvia from the gas; and we were not surprised to hear that the soldiers, in the barracks close beneath, suffered continually from sickness since the period when the gas-works had been established. Unpleasant smells, however, seldom seem to distress French organs; and our disgust only amused our companions, who seemed now, for the first time, to perceive that it was not as agreeable as the mignonette beds we had left.

We were not sorry to reach the beautiful promenade of the Champ de Mars and the Fontaine de la Maréchale; a fine walk planted with numerous trees, with alleys diverging towards the village of La Font. Gardens, with high walls, extend for half a league in this direction; for here all the rich merchants of the town have their country-houses, and here they usually spend

the summer months. Being enclosed, however, the perfume of the flowers alone, and an occasional opening, betray their existence; and the walk is hot and dusty, without any view of sea, or landscape, to repay the toil. At length we found ourselves at the end of the longest village I ever was in; all composed of good square houses, the backs only of which were visible.

We turned aside, along an avenue planted with young trees, to the château of La Font; but what was our vexation to find at its extremity a range of little huts, and a black, soapy pool, at which numbers of washerwomen were busy at their ceaseless occupation. “*Voilà!*” exclaimed our hostess, in exultation, and with an air which said, You must be gratified now; “*Voilà!* this is the famous fountain *where all the linen of La Rochelle is washed!* and there is the château where my washerwoman lives,—a very respectable mother of a family;—and there are her turkeys and her farm-yard; and there is her market-garden! Oh! it is a sweet spot!”

Beyond the group of *blanchisseuses*—to whom she stopped to talk about her household arrangements,—we saw a ruined tenement flanked with round towers, very much dilapidated, and preserving but little of their ancient character, owing to having been pierced with modern windows; certainly sufficiently ruinous, if that was to be an object of

attraction, but not otherwise worthy of note. Girls and women, in wooden shoes, were sitting about in a slovenly yard before it, and we were welcomed as guests by one who got chairs and placed them in sight of the farm-yard wonders for our accommodation: after which she disappeared with our hostess to show the washing establishment, which we declined visiting, in spite of repeated invitations, given with all the *bonhomie* in the world, as if there had really been anything to see but dirty water and soap-suds. We comprehended, afterwards, as we sat musing in the farm-yard, watching the vagaries of some angry turkeys, whose combs became perfectly white with passion, as they contended with their fellows, that the reason of so much pride and admiration on the part of our hostess and the mistress of the *Château de La-Font* was, that the washing here was carried on *under cover*; whereas, that operation usually takes place by the side of rivers and brooks, in the open face of nature, without hot water or tubs. No wonder that our apathy annoyed the parties, who had so just a reason to “be vaunty” of so expensive an establishment!

This, then, is all that remains of the castle of La Font, once a place so contended for during the numerous sieges, and which the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III., took possession of, when he ordered his soldiers to destroy all the fountains

which supplied the besieged town of La Rochelle with water. On this spot, where Protestants and Catholics fought deadly battles, and disputed every inch of ground, the battle of a couple of turkeys, and the splashing and thumping of a group of washerwomen, were all that existed to interest the beholder.

We walked round the towers and into the field at the back, but scarcely a bit of old wall repaid our trouble; and finding that the subject of washing became all engrossing to our hostess, who seemed to have forgotten that the hotel of the Three Candlesticks and its dinner-hour had existence, we rose and left the party, directing our way back to the town.

We had managed to make our escape quietly, but our defection once perceived, consternation ensued, and the departure of La Noue from the Protestant camp could scarcely have created more sensation. We were pursued, and accompanied home to the hotel, with repeated apologies for having been allowed to remain alone until we became *ennuyées*; and so persecuted were we with politeness, that we were not sorry to take refuge in the solemn *salle-à-manger*, where, though nearly two hours past dinner-time, we found no preparations yet on foot for our relief. It was impossible, considering the well-meant intention of our hostess, to be angry at anything; but, without exception,

the whole arrangement at this most unique of all inns, was the least comfortable that any unfortunate traveller ever had to put up with. Every day we meditated leaving, and every day her good-humour, and a bath and walk at the delicious sea-side, made us abandon our resolve, and—

“Tempered us to bear;
It was but for a day.”

Indeed, it was impossible to be otherwise than content, to find oneself seated in one of the pretty alcoves of the Bath gardens, with a magnificent expanse of sparkling sea before the eye, a gentle murmur of waters at the feet, a hundred gleaming sails, white and red, gliding along the surface of the glittering wave, the towers of the distant town shining out from the mass of buildings which surround them, the full harbour, the green alleys, the superb trees, the pretty shrubs, the distant island shores, everything, in fact, smiling and gay and beautiful around. To forget Les Trois Chandeliers, and to grudge the time necessary for finding a new domicile, was a natural consequence; and the want of *matériel* to satisfy the sea-side appetite—sure to be gained after a whole day's sojourn on the beach—became an after consideration, our domestic privations were therefore constantly neglected, bewailed, and forgotten again next day while eating grapes and bread in the beloved alcove.

There appears to be much ease in the circumstances of the inhabitants of La Rochelle : we understood that there were not many persons of very large fortune, but few positively poor. The commerce is inferior now to what it has been ; as, for instance, in the *glorious* time of the *slave trade* ; but there appears still to be a good deal of bustle on the quays : however, to an English eye, all French trade seems dull when compared to the movement in our own ports. There is always building going on here, as in every other town in France, where one might imagine everything had been at a stand-still for a century, and had suddenly been endowed with new life and activity. The cities of France seem—like the enchanted domains of the marble prince of the Arabian Nights—to have been doomed to a long inaction, and restored to existence by an invisible power. The magic which changed the blue and red fishes into men, was less potent than the wise rule of the present sovereign of the kingdom, under whom his country flourishes ; not a town or village being forgotten in his endeavours to rescue them from the long night of wretchedness into which war and misrule had cast them. Everywhere his donations and encouragement cause ruins and filth to disappear, and splendour and neatness to take their place : yet, in spite of all this, and obvious as the benefit is to a traveller who hears of his benefactions wherever he passes, few of the subjects of

this considerate and liberal monarch seem sufficiently grateful for his patriotic endeavours to exalt their position. "He has not done *much* for *us*," is the general remark; a rather startling one, when one recollects the hundreds of towns, villages, and bourgs which his care has reached.

The French are certainly neither grateful nor just; for they seldom remember or acknowledge obligation either to individuals or kings. They seem, also, wilfully blind to the blessings of the peace, which Louis Philippe so offends their warlike propensities by insisting on: even while they are restoring all their battered towns and erecting new edifices, of which they are proud enough, they would willingly leave them half done to draw the sword against some windmill giant, and buckle on their armour to encounter some puppet-show termagant.

The public buildings of La Rochelle are fine, but the narrowness of most of the streets in which they are placed, prevents their showing to advantage. If the Palais de Justice stood in the fine square opposite the cathedral, for instance, it would have a very imposing effect; but, as it is, one passes under its arcades, and under the arcades opposite, half-a-dozen times before its beauties become apparent. It is a modern building of great taste and delicacy, in the style of the Renaissance; the friezes and entablatures being executed with extreme skill and grace. The

Bourse is also a beautiful building, having a gallery supported by a colonnade, which connects two of its wings, and which separates the court from a pretty plantation of ornamental trees, which agreeably adorns the edifice. But the ancient building of the Hôtel de Ville is that which most attracts, both for its beauty and its recollections. The taste of Francis I. and Henry II. is evident in its architecture. Henry IV.'s additions are also obvious, and more modern *improvements* have considerably altered its original appearance.

The entrance is comparatively modern and ugly; which is the more to be regretted, since, from this spot the Maire Guiton—the great hero of La Rochelle, spoke to the people when obliged to consent to the capitulation of the town. However, the site itself cannot but be interesting; and all that surrounds it remains as it must have been at his time. The singular gallery, and its ornamented roof in compartments, with a thousand interlaced letters and devices, as mysterious as those at the house of Jacques Cœur, at Bourges, the façade, and statues, and foliage, and ornamental mouldings, the curious windows, the ancient screen, the outer walls, and *tourelles* of the thirteenth, and battlements and doorways of the fifteenth century, all are singular and attractive.

It was, probably, in this palace that the accident happened to Charles the Seventh, *Le Bien Servi*,

told with so much characteristic simplicity by Mezeray.

When the news of the death of his father, the unfortunate Charles the Sixth, was brought to the Dauphin, says the Chronicler, “ he was then at Espally, in Auvergne, a castle belonging to the Bishop of Le Puy. He wore mourning only one day ; and the next morning changed this sad colour to scarlet. In this habit he went to hear mass in the chapel of the castle ; as soon as it was over he ordered the banner of France to be displayed, at the sight of which all present cried out, *Vive le Roy!* And from that time he was recognised and called king by all good Frenchmen. But as he had neither Paris nor Rheims in his possession, he repaired to Poitiers to be crowned, where his parliament then was, and there received the oaths and homage of all who acknowledged him as sovereign. From Poitiers he took his way to La Rochelle, on a warning which was given him that the Duke of Brittany had secret designs, and that he was making warlike and powerful preparations to take possession of this province.

There he nearly lost his life by a strange invention—the machination of some of his enemies ; for, as he was holding his council in a great hall, the beams having been sawn asunder, the ceiling gave way and fell, burying every one beneath the ruins. Jacques de Bourbon, Seigneur de Preaux, died in consequence, several others were grievously wounded,

but the king, by a good fortune, almost miraculous, escaped. 'This was a certain presage, that, after great danger, Divine Providence, in the end, would save him, and draw him forth from the ruins of his empire against all human expectation.'

Thus was saved the most ungrateful of all monarchs; one who suffered his friends to exert every nerve in his favour, while he sat carelessly by and saw them betrayed and slaughtered for his sake, of him Lahire said,

“ On ne pouvait perdre son royaume plus gaïement,”

He was urged to action only, at last, by superstition; and when all was gained for him, had nothing with which to reward his devoted friends but banishment and confiscation, as in the case of Jacques Cœur, his ill-used friend, whose money had gained him back his kingdom. Yet, at last, his death was as wretched as if he had perished in the hall at La Rochelle, for he died of famine, to avoid being poisoned by his unnatural son.

We entered the great hall at the top of the flight of steps in the centre of the building, and followed a party who were visiting the interior, by which means, although the hall was otherwise closed, we were able to see the great picture recently *given by the king*, with his usual liberality, to the town of La Rochelle.

In this *salle* is still seen the marble table, and

the chair of the Maire Guiton; a mark across the marble is shown as that made by his sword when, in his agony, he struck the table, as he rose, indignant at the proposals of surrender made to him. There is nothing else in the hall which is not modern, even its form, which has been changed for the convenience of the meetings which take place here.

The picture is one of very exciting interest, and is very well executed; it is the work of M. Omer Chartel—a native, I believe, of La Rochelle—and is a most appropriate present to the town in which the circumstances it depicts took place.

Jean Guiton was mayor of La Rochelle at the time when, in 1628, Louis XIII., or rather the Cardinal de Richelieu, besieged the Protestants in the town. His mysterious disappearance, the uncertainty attached to his fate, the suspicions of his motives,—notwithstanding the grandeur of his character, and the determination of his resistance,—altogether invest him with singular interest, and every particular of his history which can be collected must be eagerly sought for.

He was appointed to the office of chief-magistrate at a moment of great danger; and on the occasion made this celebrated speech: “Fellow-citizens, I accept the honour you design me, on this condition only, that I shall have a right to pierce with this sword the heart of him who shall be base enough to

“speak the words of peace, or who shall dare to talk of submission. Should I be cowardly enough to do so, let my blood expiate my crime, and let the meanest citizen be my executioner: the sacred love of his country will exculpate him for the act. Meantime let this poniard remain upon the council-table, an object of terror to the craven and betrayer.”

The siege went on, and the unfortunate Rochellois were reduced to the last extremity; famine and misery brought them to the lowest ebb of human suffering; and, in spite of their valour and high resolves, it was evident that nothing but submission could save them from the most horrible fate. Their implacable enemy had wound his coils around their town, the fatal *digue*, thrown up with labour, incredible and impossible to all but hate, prevented any succours reaching them; there it lay, circling their port like a huge constrictor waiting patiently for its exhausted prey,—there was no remedy, and the chief persons of the town repaired in a body to Guiton to represent the state of the inhabitants and to propose a surrender. They bade him look around on the famishing wretches who lay about the streets; they bade him look on his perishing wife and dying child; they described the hopeless state of things, the cruel perseverance of their foes, and they besought him to give consent that they should treat with the besiegers.

“Is it even so?” said Guiton; “you all desire

it? Take, then, this poniard; you know the condition on which I accepted office, you know I swore to stab to the heart the first man who should speak of surrender; let me be the victim; but never hope that I will participate in the infamy which you propose to me."

These words produced their effect; those most resolved on submission were turned from their project, and all retired from his presence abashed, and determined to suffer still. But the famine continued, increased, no succour arrived, and human fortitude could endure no more; the Rochellois opened their gates, and Richelieu was triumphant. But where was Jean Guiton?—that question remains to be answered to this day.

He was never seen more; some have thought that he was assassinated by those who feared his resentment or his opposition; or by those who considered him still formidable, though fallen; others imagined that the king, to whom his talents as a seaman were known, and who admired the firmness of his character, had seduced him, by offers of great advantage, to abandon his party and enter his service. There is a tradition that he distinguished himself in the armies of Louis, under an assumed name, and became a terror to the enemies of France. Again, he is said to have been condemned to perpetual imprisonment; and again, to have spent his days in exile from

his native land, having fled from the town at the time of its reduction.

Whatever his fate may have been, it is unknown; and conjecture alone fills up the blank. It is difficult to imagine that a man such as he could listen to offers of advantage, or would have betrayed the cause for which he was ready to sacrifice his life: that he died in exile, unable to endure to see the destruction of his hopes, is more probable.

The painter has chosen the moment when the citizens are making their last appeal, and he has succeeded in conveying the feeling and interest of the scene in an eminent degree; it is impossible to look at the picture without tears, which certainly must speak a great deal in its favour; criticism may come afterwards, and a few defects may make themselves observed; but the first impression is, that of pity and commiseration for the actors in the sad drama represented.

The Mayor of La Rochelle, with a mournful countenance, is listening to the words of Etienne Gentils, who was deputed as spokesman on the sad occasion: the commandant, Perrot, and his son stand by, and by their gestures confirm his statements. The Marquis de Feuquières—a Catholic prisoner, who had become a friend of the Rochellois, and anxiously strove to obtain for them favourable terms—is a prominent person. Paul

Yvon, sire de Laden, the former mayor, adds his entreaties—Madame de Maisonneuve, his daughter, has cast herself at the feet of Guiton, with her two children, and points to the pale and fainting wife of the inflexible citizen, who lies prostrate on the ground with his dying child in her arms. The scene is fearful, and the struggle terrible; he holds the dagger in his hand, and his look, though full of sorrow, speaks of no indecision. You feel that it must have been impossible to gain over such a man to the opposite party; and you cannot but thank the artist for rescuing his memory from the reproach endeavoured to be cast upon it.

Altogether, the picture is most appropriate and interesting, and we rejoiced that we were so fortunate as to arrive at La Rochelle just at the moment that it was being placed in the Grande Salle.

With infinitely more interest than before, we now walked down to the *Marché Neuf*, where several elegant *tourelles*, at the corners of a street of arcades, had previously attracted our attention, for we found that the street was called *Rue Guiton*, and the *tourelles* formed part of a beautifully-ornamented house, whose façade runs along one side of the market-place. This was the mansion of the unfortunate mayor, and magnificent it must have been; it is built in the style of the Renaissance, and in the same taste as parts of the *Hôtel de Ville*; but the carved ornaments are more

delicate. It is to be regretted that the whole house could not be preserved as a memorial ; but still the little that remains must be hailed with pleasure, though built into shops, and serving as receptacles for different wares. One *tourelle* is particularly sharp and fine, and does not seem to have sustained the slightest injury from time. No doubt the house was very extensive ; probably the gardens occupied the space where now the market is kept. In the centre of the square is one of the numerous fountains, for which the town is famous : this is called La Fontaine des Petits Bancs, and no doubt formerly one on the same spot adorned the gardens of the mayoralty.

No sooner had Louis XIII. gained possession of the Protestant city, than he began the work of *Reformation*. He had his monks ready in the camp, "like greyhounds on the slip," and three Minimes from Touraine, who had been sent as almoners, immediately commenced the building of a convent, which took the place of the Huguenot temples, under the name of Notre Dame de la Victoire. Where it stood, now stands a fort and a lazaretto.

Another convent was established at La Font, not a vestige of which remains.

The cathedral was once more restored to the old worship, and on the great Fontaine du Château, in the square in front of it, the enemies of the

Protestant party placed *brass* tablets, full of insult to those who had so nobly defended their town, and who, from a generous foe, would have commanded respect. These injurious inscriptions were, however, removed one night; nor was it ever known by whom; and the authorities did not think it advisable to replace them: the marks of their existence still remain.

Another mayor of La Rochelle obtained celebrity in much earlier times, for conduct not quite so heroic as that of Guiton.

Amongst the many scenes of war which have taken place before La Rochelle, not the least curious is one related by Froissart, which occurred at the time when France was making a desperate struggle to recover her towns from the power of England.

The Earl of Pembroke had been sent by his father, King Edward, with the famous Captain Messire Guichart d'Angle, to Poitou, with vessels and money; they set forth, commending themselves to the grace of God and St. George, and, wind and weather favouring them, the gallant fleet soon reached the coast of Poitou, with every prospect of success in their adventure. But the King of France, Charles the Wise, who always managed to get information of everything done by his enemies—whether by means of the prescience of his astrologers or his spies is not known,—having

heard that Guichart had visited England with a view of getting supplies and a new commander, had secretly prepared a hostile fleet ready to way-lay the English. Forty large ships and thirteen barges, well manned and provided, were furnished by the King of Castile, and were commanded by four men whose names were a terror at the period. These were, Ambrosio de Bocca Negra the Grand Admiral of Spain, Cabeza de Vaca, Ferrant de Pion, and Radigole Roux, or Riu Diaz de Rojas.

These valiant captains had moored their fleet opposite the harbour of La Rochelle, awaiting the expected arrival of the English and their allies, for whose sails they looked anxiously forth. It was on the Vigil of St. John the Baptist's Day, 1372, that the Spaniards espied the English approaching in gallant array, and *they* discovered that the entrance to the town of La Rochelle was stopped, and that a contest must ensue.

The English were greatly inferior in ships and numbers; but there was no want of spirit amongst them. The Earl of Pembroke made several knights on the occasion, and every nerve was strained to support the character of British valour. They had fearful odds to sustain, and terrible was the battle which was fought, in which such deeds of arms were done, that Palmerin of England, and Amadis de Gaul, seemed leading on the

combatants. But it soon became too evident that the brave handful of English, and the small vessels, were no match for the opposing power. This, the inhabitants of La Rochelle were aware of, but they were ill-disposed to interfere or to assist the English.

When Messire Jean de Harpedane, the seneschal of La Rochelle, heard the *estrief* and *riote* which took place without, and found in what straits his friends were placed, he implored the mayor and people of La Rochelle to arm and go to the relief of the English; he entreated them to send out the numerous vessels which crowded their quays, to aid and comfort those who were so valiantly fighting against odds. But his animated harangue was met with silence and coldness, and he found, to his great vexation, that there was no sympathy for King Edward's people.

Harpedane had been supported in his generous desire by three brave and bold knights, the Lord of Tonnay-Boutonne, Jacques de Surgières, and Maubrun de Linières; and when they found that no one would listen to their representations, they resolved to embark, together with all their people, and go to the succour of the English. At day-break they sailed forth, and, with some difficulty, reached the fleet, where they were joyfully welcomed, notwithstanding that they brought bad news, and confirmed the doubts of the English that no succour awaited them. They, however, resolved to fight to the last,

and remained prepared for the attack of the Spaniards, who, favoured by the wind, came down upon them, and casting out irons, grappled with their ships and held them close. Then ensued a terrible contest, in which the greatest part of the English were killed, the treasure-vessels sunk, and all the others destroyed; and the day closed by the capture of the Earl of Pembroke, Guichart d'Angle, and all the brave knights of their company. The Spaniards then made great rejoicings, and sailed away with all their prisoners; but, meeting with adverse winds, they were obliged to put into the port of Santander in Biscay, where they carried them to a fortress and cast them into a deep dungeon, loading them with chains: "No other courtesy had these Spaniards to offer them!"

After this the Rochellois threw off their obedience to the English, and declared themselves friends and subjects of France: the manner in which this event occurred is thus related:—

The mayor of the town, Jean Coudourier, or Chaudrier, was secretly friendly to the French, and had agreed with the famous Captain Ivan, of Wales, who was before La Rochelle, to deliver the town to him. The stratagem he used was characteristic, for the governor of the Castle, Phillippot, though a brave and good knight, was in the case of William of Deloraine,—

"Of letter or line knew he never a one;"

and by this neglect in his education was he betrayed.

The artful Chaudrier, who appeared to be his intimate friend, invited the governor to dine with him one day, with some of the citizens of the town, and took occasion, before dinner, to say that he had just received news from England which concerned him. The governor desiring to know them, he replied, "Of course you shall hear; I will fetch the letter, and it shall be read to you." He then went to a coffer and took out an open letter, sealed, indeed, with the great seal of Edward of England, but which, in fact, related to quite other matters; the governor recognised the seal, and was satisfied that it was an official communication; but, as for the writing, "he was ignorance itself" in that. A clerk, in the plot, was ordered to enlighten him as to its contents, and read that the King desired the mayor to send him an exact account of all the forces in La Rochelle and the castle, by the bearer of that letter, as he desired to know, and hoped soon to visit the town himself.

Thereupon the mayor begged that on the day following a muster should be made, in the grand square, of all these men-at-arms, and he offered to lend money to the governor, being so directed by the King, to pay his troops. All this was done as was projected, and the muster took place, every man-at-arms leaving the château, and only a few

servants remaining there. Meantime the cunning mayor had provided an ambush of four hundred men, who concealed themselves in *old houses uninhabited which were in the square*, and, when all the troops were assembled, these issued out, and intercepting the return, took possession of the castle, and became masters of the citadel.

Resistance was now in vain: the governor was completely tricked, and the artful traitor had gained his end. La Rochelle became French, and the first step that was taken for the security of the town, in case of its again falling into the hands of the English, was to raze the castle to the ground, and destroy that means of defence.

CHAPTER XII.

ROCHEFORT — THE CURIOUS BONNE—AMERICANISMS—CONVICTS—
THE CHARENTE—"TULIPES"—TAILLEBOURG—HENRY THE THIRD
—ST. LOUIS—FALSE SECURITY—ROMEGOUX—PUYTAILLÉ.

OUR good fortune in respect to the weather, which we so much enjoyed at La Rochelle, seemed to have taken leave of us when we quitted that charming town and took our way southward. It rained in torrents when we got into the diligence for Rochefort, and continued to do so throughout our journey. The country is very flat for several leagues, and possesses no remarkable beauties ; occasionally a turn of the road brought us close to the sea-shore ; and its fine waves, dashing against the shingles, made music to our ears, and we regretted leaving it behind us. The sea seems always to me like a friend ; it offers, besides, a means of escape ; it appears to tell one that a vessel is ready to take the tired wanderer back to England : there is something like *home* in its vicinity, and I can well imagine with what sensations an exile might "come to the beach," and sigh forth his soul towards his native

land. But that I had interests still greater awaiting me at Bordeaux, I should have been even more sorry to have quitted this coast ; and every time we caught another glimpse of the waves, we hailed them with pleasure.

We arrived at Rochefort, as we had frequently done at other towns in France—where the climate is supposed to be better than our own—in pouring rain ; but, this time, with a little difference, inasmuch as the diligence stopped in the midst of a large square outside the town, planted with trees, with hotels in different directions, and the bureau within twenty yards : nevertheless, the conducteur's pleasure was to stop his horses exactly midway between us and shelter : all the doors were thrown open, the horses were taken off, and the passengers were free to get out and paddle to the nearest inn as best they might. Calling and exclaiming were of no use ; no one attended to our remonstrances ; and, scrambling out *over the wheel*—for the coupé has not the advantage of a step—while a deluge of rain and a hurricane were striving against us, we managed to reach the wet ground ; but, being required, peremptorily, to show ourselves at the bureau, we were not permitted to wade to an opposite hotel, and, therefore, took our station, with other discontented individuals, under a shed where building was going on, and where our wet feet stuck in the lime and mortar which covered the floor. While we waited till our

conducteur had ceased to rave at his horses and assistants, a sudden cry warned us to remove, for the diligence, pushed in by several men, was coming upon us to discharge its baggage. Having escaped this danger by flying into a neighbouring passage, we obeyed the summons of our tyrant; and having discharged his demands, a latent pity seemed to take possession of his bosom, for he allowed us to depart, having bestirred himself to send our baggage before us to the nearest hotel. There we found the hour of the *table d'hôte* dinner had arrived, and much entreaty was necessary to induce the hostess to permit us to dine alone, the absurdity of the wish seeming to strike her as extraordinary:—"It would be so much more gay down stairs," she observed. Wet and tired, we had no mind for the festivity which might reign in her halls, and at length gained our point: having served us, a pretty young coun-



try maid, in a large cap, who had looked at us with wonder from the first, seemed resolved to fill up the little leisure left her, by contemplating closer the

extraordinary animals that chance had brought to her mistress's hotel. She put her hands on her sides, and, opening her black eyes wide, gave us a long stare, exclaiming, "Eh, mon Dieu ! est-ce donc possible !"

We asked her if many English came to Rochefort; to which she replied, as we expected, that she had never *seen one* before. We wished her good night; she was some time in taking our hint, but, as she was good-humoured, her determined delay did not annoy us, as a similar intrusion had done at La Rochelle, when the cross *bonne*, on the evening of our arrival, took her seat at the window, and looked out into the street to amuse herself; and, on our intimating that she might retire, turned round fiercely, and remarked, "You can't be going to bed yet." These *Americanisms* are common enough in this most polite of nations; but are simply amusing from such unsophisticated beings as the attendant at Rochefort.

Rochefort is a handsome, clean, open, well-built town, quite without antiquities; but, as our next destination was Saintes—one of the oldest towns in France—we were content with its more modern appearance, though not with its pavement, which is particularly bad and rugged. It is surrounded with very handsome ramparts, or boulevards, planted with fine trees, and the principal streets have avenues, in one of which the large

market is held, which has a picturesque effect—the high poplars and spreading acacias throwing their flickering shadows on groups of peasants in lively-coloured costumes, giving a brilliancy and life to the scene, which is not found in the other parts of the remarkably dull town of Louis XIV. Rochefort is the third important port in France; but as nothing can be so uninteresting to me, who do not understand these details, as to look on fortifications, and the bustle of a port when there is no sea to repay one—and Rochefort is only on the Charente, four leagues from the sea—I did not attempt to visit the quays; the hospitals are said to be fine; also, the school of artillery, and several commercial establishments of great consequence; but the trade of Rochefort does not appear very flourishing, to judge by the desolate appearance of the streets and squares.

The only place we visited, was the Jardin des Plantes, which is charmingly laid out in alleys and parterres; but a circumstance occurred which entirely destroyed the pleasure of our walk, and brought thoughts of woe and crime into the midst of beautiful nature and elegant art. As we hung over the parapet of a wall, we observed a party of men passing beneath, dressed in a singular costume: they were singing rather vociferously, and it struck me that, as they moved, a clanking sound accompanied their steps, for which I feared to

account. As I turned away from these, my eye was attracted by a group of gardeners, in an alley near, who wore the same dress of dull yellowish red. One of them was a tall, fine, handsome man, who seemed busy in his occupation; the others were indolently using their spades and brooms; and as they moved, I saw that all had irons round their legs. A shudder came over me, and a sort of fear, which I could not shake off, as I looked round to see that we did not share these groves alone with such companions, of whom we were not long in taking our leave;—not that there was anything hostile or alarming in their appearance; but, though one may every day jostle a robber or a murderer, ignorantly, in the streets, yet to be “innocent of the knowledge” of his character, is much more agreeable to one’s nerves, than the certainty of his being a culprit.

Although we had taken every precaution, by warning all the servants of our intention of departing by the steam-boat for Saintes,—had paid our bill, and been ready an hour before the time, yet the *garçon* who was to accompany us to the quay was nowhere to be found when we required his aid. When a diligence is to start, it is the custom, as we well knew, always to announce its time of departure an hour, or sometimes two, before it goes, as the *monde* is supposed to be never in time; but, even in France, time must be kept when

tide is in question ; and we, therefore, were very much afraid that our dilatory waiter would cause us to lose our passage. It would seem that the French can do nothing without being frightened into action ; and that they enjoy putting themselves into frights and fevers ; for our porter, when he did appear, had to hurry, with his great barrow, through numerous streets, calling all the way, and begging that the boat would stop for *des dames*, till he was almost exhausted. The captain, who must have been used to these scenes, took compassion on him, I suppose, and we stept at length into the steamer, amidst the congratulations of the crowd, and a whole host of porters, who brought every article of baggage singly on board, in order to make the most of their zeal.

Henry IV., who liked to pay compliments to his people, and gain

“ Golden opinions from all sorts of men,”

was accustomed, it is said, to call the river Charente “ the prettiest stream in his kingdom ;” and it certainly deserves much admiration, for the borders are rich, varied, and graceful ; and the voyage along its verdant banks is extremely agreeable on a calm, fine day : such as we were fortunate enough to choose. There is no want of variety ; for heights, crowned with towers and turrets and woods and meadows, succeed each other rapidly, offering

pleasing points of view, and reviving recollections of ancient story; and though the Charente by no means deserves to be compared to the Loire, ambitious as the natives of the department are that it should be considered equal in beauty and interest to that famous river; yet there is quite enough charm belonging to it to please the traveller who seeks for new scenes.

In few parts of France do the English travel so little as in this direction; and I believe the pretty river Charente has been rarely visited. A summer at La Rochelle could, nevertheless, be pleasantly spent, and the facilities of steam-boats in so many directions, is a great advantage, as there is much worth seeing in this agreeable country.

We were much struck with the extremely beautiful effect produced by the fairy-like, delicate appearance of a sort of crocus—of a pale, clear, lilac colour—which entirely covered the meadows, the light as it shone through their fragile stems making them look ærial. All along the banks, for leagues, these pretty flowers* spread themselves over the ground, in a perfect cloud of blossoms, reaching to the very wave, and, shaking their gossamer heads to the breeze, gleaming their golden centres through the transparent petals, like a light in an alabaster vase. As we admired them, a young woman near us, in the boat, shook her head, and

* The *Iris zippium*.

exclaimed that we were not, perhaps, aware that those pretty '*tulipes*' were deadly poison, and that very lately, a man of a village near this, had employed their bulbous roots as onions, and given the soup made with them to his wife and a neighbour, to whom he bore a spite : that they both died, and he was found to be the murderer, and suffered accordingly. My thoughts recurred, as she spoke, to the convicts in the garden of Rochefort, and with no very pleasant sensations. I was sorry she had spoilt the pleasure I had taken in looking at these beautiful flowers, which she seemed to regard with horror.

There are several fine suspension-bridges over the river ; this part of the country is celebrated for them ; that of Charente is considered very remarkable of its kind, and it is a usual excursion from La Rochelle to visit it.

At St. Savinien is a venerable church and tower, which make an imposing appearance, on a height, and the ruins of the once redoubtable castle of Taillebourg frown majestically from the rocky hills they cover. All this coast was the scene of the contentions of our early kings ; and Cœur de Lion and his father were actors in several of the dramas here performed.

The great hero, but disobedient son, Richard, after being forced by Henry II. to quit Saintes where he had entrenched himself, fled to this very

fortress of Taillebourg, and there defied attack. Henry III. of England, more than half a century later, made this part of the river the theatre of his contentions with St. Louis, as Joinville relates. Henry had disembarked at Royan—now a fashionable bathing-place, at the mouth of the Charente—and resolved, if possible, to gain back all that John Lackland had lost, led his army from town to town, taking possession of all in his way, till the sudden arrival of St. Louis stopped his career. The King of France laid siege to Tonnay-Boutonne, of which strong place scarcely anything now remains, took it, and reconquered several other fortresses. At length Louis sat down before Taillebourg, then held by Geoffrey de Rancon for the King of England. It was here, in these crocus-covered meadows, opposite the blackened walls of this crumbling ruin, that the great monarch pitched his tents and placed his camp, intending from thence to attack his enemy at Saintes.

Henry, meantime, felt secure that the Lord of Taillebourg would stand his friend, and that his strong castle would be a powerful protection to the English army, and he should be able materially to molest the French; but the grim Baron de Rancon was in his heart a foe to the English, and had embraced their cause upon compulsion: he waited but a favourable moment to betray them; and when, from his towers, he saw the French army encamped

in the meadows beneath them, he threw open his gates and sallied forth, followed by a numerous band of warriors, visited King Louis in his tent, and offered him his castle to abide in. His invitation was accepted, and Louis and his knights returned with him to his castle.

Henry, hearing of this arrangement, took counsel with his general, Hugues de Lusignan, and removed his head-quarters immediately to the neighbourhood of De Rancon's fortress, placing his troops in the meadows immediately opposite those occupied by the soldiers of Louis; the river only separated them, and across it was a long bridge, part of the ruins of which, evidently of Roman construction, may still be seen far away in the flat meadows. Henry's force was much inferior to that of his opponent, and he declined coming at once to battle, as Louis desired: he drew off his soldiers, leaving a strong defence on the bridge; by this movement wishing to indicate that he did not intend engaging; but the French could not be restrained, and Louis, giving way to their impetuosity, charged the defenders of the bridge at the head of five hundred knights. Immediately the river was covered with soldiers, who leaped into boats, and, hastening across the river, fell upon the English with great fury. The shock was well sustained; Duke Richard, brother to Henry, Lusignan, De Montford, and others, brought up their troops to the conflict.

St. Louis ran great risks that day ; for Joinville says, that for every man with him the English had a hundred : as he was in the thick of the fray, his life was in great peril ; but he was successful, and remained in possession of the bridge, and the left bank of the Charente. Had he pursued his advantage, the English might have been entirely routed ; but, reflecting that the next day was Sunday, and should be devoted to prayer, he consented to the truce proposed by Duke Richard, and ordered his men to re-cross the bridge.

Richard cunningly took advantage of this circumstance, and hurrying back to his brother's tent, exclaimed, " Quick, quick ! not a moment is to be lost ; let us fly or we are defeated !" As rapidly as possible the tents were struck, the baggage prepared, and every man in readiness ; and, in the darkness of night, King Henry mounted his good steed, and never slackened rein till he reached the walls of Saintes, followed by his soldiers, who, harassed and fatigued, were not sorry to find themselves once more in security.

The astonishment of Louis was great, when, at break of day, he looked from his castle windows, and saw no vestige of the great army which had covered the country on the preceding night : he very quietly ordered his troops to cross the bridge, and they took possession of the spot just left by the English. The next day he prepared to march

on Saintes, and sent couriers forward to reconnoitre the country : a shepherd, who had observed these movements, hastened to warn the Count de la Marche, who, with his two sons, and his vassals, were in the Faubourg de St. Eutrope. Hugues de Lusignan marched forth immediately to meet the French *avant-garde*, without naming his intention to the King of England who was lodged in the town.

Count Alfonse de Boulogne coming up at the moment with his party, joined the *avant-garde*, and a furious combat took place : the first who fell was the châtelain of Saintes, who held the banner of the Count de la Marche. On both sides resounded the terrible war-cries of “ Aux armes ! Aux armes ! ” and “ Royaux ! Royaux ! ” and “ Mont-joie ! Mont-joie ! ” according to the usage of both nations.

These cries, the neighing of horses, and the clash of arms, were heard to a great distance, and reached the ears of the King of England, who demanded the cause : he was told that the Count de la Marche, resolved to repair his honour, which he considered that their late retreat had sullied, had attacked the French. At this news Henry called for his armour, assembled his warriors, and hastened to the succour of his father-in-law. At this juncture arrived King Louis. Mortified to be forestalled by an enemy, who he considered had basely quitted the field, he gave the signal, and the soldiers of France fell pell-mell on the Anglo-Aquitainians, who received them firmly.

A general *mêlée* then took place beneath the walls of Saintes; and in the midst of the vines, amongst the groves, in the fields, on the high roads, a frightful carnage ensued.

The French fought with fury, increased by the resistance they met with; the English ranks began to thin; overpowered by numbers, their battalions became broken, the men turned their backs, and fled in disorder to the gates of the town, to which the French pursued them with fearful slaughter. In vain Henry and Hugues de Lusignan endeavoured to rally the dispersed troops; their expostulations were drowned in the noise and confusion, and they were themselves carried away by the stream of fugitives. Many of the French, in the ardour of the combat, entered the town with the enemy, and were made prisoners. Louis then sounded a retreat, and fixed his camp a short distance from the walls.

The following days were employed in secret negotiations between the Count de la Marche and St. Louis, which ended in their reconciliation, and the Count's abandonment of the English monarch. Meantime Henry, with his usual carelessness, after the first trouble was over, blindly deceived himself into security, and resolved to spend the heats of the month of August in quiet and enjoyment, forgetting that he was little better than a prisoner in Saintes, and taking no heed of the treachery of his friends without. Four days he allowed to pass as if no enemy were at his gates; he even made parties of

pleasure, and seemed resolved to think no more of the war, when he was suddenly roused from his false security by his brother, Richard, who had been warned of the dangers which threatened them by a French knight, whose life he had saved in Palestine.

By this means the self-deceiving monarch learnt that preparations were being made by Louis to invest the town with all his forces, and that the next day at day-break the siege was to commence. When this intelligence reached Henry he was just about to sit down to table; at the same time he learnt that the citizens of Saintes proposed to treat with his foes; and he had not an instant to lose. He promptly gave orders that the houses of the *bourgeois* should *be set on fire*, and, mounting his horse, set out, hungry and fatigued as he was after a day's excursion of amusement, towards Blaye, as fast as speed could take him. His captains were soon informed of his flight; they left their half-cooked viands, as did all the army, who were still fasting, and the confusion of departure exceeded belief; all hurried towards Blaye, where they sought refuge, exhausted and worn, and but for a few berries which they gathered to satisfy the cravings of their hunger, they had nearly all perished on the way.

The following day the citizens and clergy of Saintes, in solemn procession, repaired to the camp of St. Louis, bringing with them the keys of the town, and swearing oaths of fealty. The King of France entered in triumph, occupied all the evacu-

ated posts, and placed a garrison in the old citadel of the capital. His next care was to subdue all the lords of the neighbouring castles, which, having done, he commenced building a new line of walls to replace the dilapidated Anglo-Roman line, which was falling in ruins. After this, says the chronicler, St. Louis returned to his dominion of France, leaving garrisons in all the strong places of Saintonge and Aunis.

The ruins of the castle of Taillebourg serve, like most fortresses in France now-a-days, as promenades to the town to which they belong ; all along the top of the massive walls, which extend to some distance, is a line of open balustrades, which has, from the river, a very ornamental and somewhat Italian effect. Spreading trees rise above this, which appear to form part of a plantation within, and placed, as the castle is, on a very great elevation, at a turn of the river, which it must have commanded, it has a peculiarly imposing and picturesque effect. The town by no means answers to the beauty of its promenades ; but that is very frequently the case, and need not be a matter of surprise. A series of rugged rocks, continued for some distance along the shore, add much to the beauty of the scenery. The next castle is that of Bussac, which retains a part of its old walls and towers, though a modern building fills up the vacancies between. It stands well, and must have been a fitting neighbour to Taillebourg ; beyond this is a magnificent wood, Le Bois

de Sainte Marie, which covers the hills for nearly a league, and has a very grand appearance.

During the wars of religion the river Charente, from the first fortress we passed of Tonnay Charente, the site of which and a few stones alone remain, to the town of Saintes, was a continued theatre of contention and violence. One scene is curious ; its hero was another of the redoubtable barons of Taillebourg named Romegoux, whose singular expedition is thus recounted :

The town of Saintes, having changed masters several times, was in the hands of the Huguenot party, and the governor was the lord of Bussac when Charles IX. sent the Duke of Anjou into that part of the country ; and, under his orders, the Sieur de la Rivière-Puytaillé made several attempts on the town ; but Bussac's vigilance foiled him continually. As he was returning to his fortress of Tonnay-Charente, there to wait for another occasion of molesting the enemy, in passing the castle of Taillebourg he was attacked by the Huguenot garrison. After a brisk skirmish the latter returned to his stronghold, growling like a disturbed bear, and longing for an opportunity to vent his rage.

Meantime, Puytaillé was again summoned to the walls of Saintes, for the citizens had risen ; and fearing that an army would besiege them if they held for the Protestants, they resolved to turn out those who were within their walls, and give themselves up to the king's officer. Bussac was obliged

therefore to yield, and was allowed to march out of one gate as Puytaillé marched in at the other.

When the Baron de Romegoux heard this he was greatly enraged, and resolved to make an effort to regain the place; he accordingly invited five or six hundred men, whom he thought as zealous as himself, to a rendezvous, but only twenty-five attended his summons. This handful showing themselves little disposed to attempt so perilous an adventure, Romegoux was almost distracted with vexation; he wept, tore his hair, and used every entreaty he could think of to induce them to join him, for he was certain of success. At length he succeeded in inspiring them with his own ardour, and they consented to accompany him wherever he should lead them.

Armed with axes, and furnished with ladders, they set out, in the middle of the night, for Saintes. They fixed their ladder near the Porte Aiguères; as they were mounting, Romegoux heard a patrol passing; as soon as it was gone he and his companions lost no time in hurrying into the town; he divided his party into two, placing them at a small distance from the rampart, to protect his retreat in case of surprise; then, followed by the most determined of his band, he marched straight to the lodging of Combaudière, who had been left by Puytaillé in his place to command in his absence.

Romegoux broke open the door, surprised the governor in his bed, forced him to rise, and, without giving him time to dress himself, obliged

him to march before them ; but so paralysed was he with terror, that he had scarcely the power to move. One of the Huguenots, therefore, placed him on his shoulders, and carried him rapidly off towards the Porte Aiguères, intending to descend by the ladders which had given them entrance : but their companions had, in the meantime, broken the bar of the gate, and lowered the drawbridge. Romegoux and his people made their exit in good order through this door, to the sound of the tocsin, the drums and the cries of alarm of the garrison and citizens, who, awaked from their slumbers, were hurrying hither and thither in the utmost confusion. The victorious party paused only at the end of the faubourg, to allow the governor to dress himself, and then went off with their prize.

Romegoux, however, though he gained great reputation by this daring adventure, was unable to carry his design further, owing to want of means, and he was so disappointed and annoyed at being forced to stop in mid-career, that he was nearly dying with vexation.

In this castle of Taillebourg was afterwards established a Protestant chapel, and *there* were buried, after the fatal battle *des Arènes*, at Saintes, the *four brothers* Coligny, of whom d'Aubigné says, "They were similar in countenance, but still more in probity, prudence, and valour."

After a very agreeable voyage, we, at length,

saw the towers and spires of the old town of Saintes rising from the waters, and landed, for the first time, *from a steam-boat*, without much confusion: we resigned ourselves at once to the care of a very little boy, who bustled about with great importance, and conducted us in triumph to the Hôtel de La Couronne, by a long and beautiful boulevard of majestic trees, which gave a very imposing impression of the town.



Roman Arch

CHAPTER XIII.

SAINTES—ROMAN ARCH OF TRIUMPH—GOTHIC BRIDGE—THE COURS
 —RUINED CITY — CATHEDRAL — COLIGNY — RUINED PALACE—
 ST. EUTROPE — AMPHITHEATRE — LEGEND OF ST. EUSTELLE —
 —THE PRINCE OF BABYLON—FÊTE—THE CÔTEAU—STE. MARIE.

OF course the earliest object which one hastens to see in Saintes, is the famous Roman arch. We beheld it first by moon-light, when its large, spectre-like proportions, as it stood in shadow, at the extremity of the bridge, gave a solemn character to the scene suitable to its antiquity : the uncertain light softened all the inequalities of its surface, and it seemed a monument of the magnificence of the days of old, which time and tempest had spared ; but it was far otherwise in the morning, when we paid it our second visit, and a broad glare of

sun-light brought out all its age and *infirmities*: then became apparent the rents and ravages which had entirely deprived it of the original polish of its surface; and it seems to totter, as if the first gale would hurl its ruins into the waters beneath. Not a stone looks in its place; they appear as if confusedly heaped one on the other, after having been destroyed and built up again: it is, therefore, with infinite surprise that you find, on approaching nearer and nearer, that its solidity is still so great—that the melted lead inserted between the stones, which binds it so firmly, is as strong as ever, and that parts of the interior of the arch are even and smooth; much, however, of this has been restored. After looking at this magnificent arch a little while, you begin to imagine it, in the glare of day, as perfect as it appeared when the moon-beams played above, and showed it in such perfection; and all the modern buildings round, look like houses built of dominos compared to its gigantic form. It is as if an old Roman were standing at the entrance of the town, silent, stern, and proud, and gazing with contempt on the ephemeral creatures of an age he knew nothing of, and who were unworthy to pass him by.

Everything about this singular monument is mysterious: it seems difficult to determine how it came in its present position, for the bridge on which it stands is of considerably later date

than itself, although that is of Gothic construction. It would appear that, at the time it was built, the waters of the Charente did not run in that direction, and having changed their course, the bridge was built from necessity, and joined the arch which existed long before: but then it must always have stood as high above the bed of the river as it does now, which puzzles one again. It is true that traces are still to be found of the ancient bed of a river, and, in a house in the Faubourg des Dames, an arch, called by tradition *Le Pont-Amillon*, has been discovered.

The date of the monument is given as the year 774 of Rome, and 21 A.D. It has two circular arches, supported by Corinthian pillars, and a broad entablature; on which the curious can read an inscription, some of the letters of which, with difficulty, we could decipher. Above the cornice, is a double range of battlements, which have a most singular appearance, as they do not, by any means, amalgamate with the rest of the building: they are, nevertheless, very boldly constructed, and appear to form part of the original design. There is, however, no doubt that they are the work of a Gothic hand, and may, probably, date with the bridge. The stones of which it is composed, are masses of four and five French feet long, and two and a half thick, placed at equal distances, without cement, and rendered solid by the introduction of melted lead and iron hooks,

some of which may still be seen in the intervals between the stones. The stone is from the neighbourhood of Saintes, and is full of shells and fossils: its height is twenty metres, French measurement: and it is three metres thick, and fifteen wide.

Great precautions were taken, in 1666, to preserve this precious monument, at the expense of M. de Bassompierre, Bishop of Saintes; but so disjointed are some of its parts, that, except the utmost care is continued, it can scarcely be expected to survive the demolition of the ancient bridge, on which it stands, and which is doomed to destruction.

I heard with consternation that such was about to be the case, and that a suspension-bridge is to replace it. What they will do with *the old Roman* it is difficult to say, or how they are to preserve it, standing, as it does, almost in the centre of the river, or what effect it will produce in so isolated a position, if permitted to stand, are questions which naturally occur. It is to be hoped that the inhabitants will delay its fate as long as possible, and, considering how very much must be done in Saintes before, by any possibility, it can be made to approach to anything like a habitable town, it seems a pity that one of its most interesting and famous possessions should be torn from it. When its Arch of Triumph falls, much of the glory of Saintes will fall with it; but it will probably one day

become a commercial town; the steam-boats, which now stop below the venerable old bridge, will sweep over the spot where it stood for ages, and the old Roman arch will be considered in the way, and will be *removed!*

The inscriptions on the *attic*, which is divided into three parts, I give from a work on the subject, as it may interest *archæological readers*:—

INSCRIPTION ON THE ATTIC, NEXT THE TOWN.

“ To Germanicus Cæsar, son of Tiberius Augustus, grandson of the divine Augustus, great grandson of the divine Julius, augur, priest of Augustus, consul for the second time, emperor for the second time.

“ To Tiberius Cæsar, son of the divine Augustus, grand pontiff, consul for the fourth time, emperor for the eighth time the year of his tribunitian power.

“ To Drusus Cæsar, son of Tiberius Augustus, grandson of the divine Augustus, great grandson of the divine Julius, pontiff, augur.”

INSCRIPTION ON THE FRIEZE, NEXT THE TOWN.

“ Caius Julius Rufus, son of Caius Julius Ottuaneunus, grandson of Caius Julius Gededmon, great grandson of Epotsorovidus, priest, consecrated to the worship of Rome and Augustus in the temple, which is at the confluence, in his quality of intendant of works, has made the dedication of this monument.”

The inscription on the frieze, at the side of the Faubourg, is the same repeated.

There seems, however, to be much uncertainty as to who the monument was dedicated to, and the subject is a constant source of dispute with the

learned: the inscription can hardly be said to exist at present, so much obliterated are the letters; but enough seems to remain to revive inquiry and puzzle conjecture. The arch is more massive, but scarcely so beautiful as the arches at Autun, with which we were so much delighted: it is much more conspicuous and higher: both of those being on low ground. There is no occasion to seek for this of Saintes; for it stands, like a huge baron of old, guarding the river: we saw a company of soldiers pass beneath it, as we lingered at a distance, and we felt astonished to think how, in the midst of the centuries of violence it had seen, in all the stormings and batterings and besiegings, it could possibly have escaped, and be still there, a monument of the power of the most redoubtable warriors of all.

Saintes is one of the most extraordinary towns I ever saw: it somewhat reminded me of Autun, of Provins, of Château Thierry; yet it is very different from either, and in fact

“None but itself can be its parallel.”

It is separated into three towns, quite distinct one from the other, yet joined, like a trefoil. As you stand on the broad boulevard leading above the first town, the other two spread out beneath on either hand. The churches of Notre Dame, of St. Eutrope, and the cathedral of St. Pierre, each claim a part.

Descending the *Cours*, the aspect of that division

which claims the stupendous church of St. Eutrope* is wondrously imposing. I never beheld anything more so, and we stood some time on the high-raised road which commanded the view, rapt in astonishment at the ruined grandeur before us. The enormous tower of St. Eutrope rises from a mass of buildings which appear Lilliputian beside it; gardens and vines and orchards slope down from it, and low in the meadows a long series of arches betray the celebrated amphitheatre—another of the wonders of this remarkable place. What convents and churches and castles and towers have been cleared away to form the *Cours* which extend from town to town, I cannot say; but it appears as if not a quarter of the original site can now be occupied; indeed, one is perfectly bewildered at every step with the piles of ruin and rubbish scattered about, the remains of old buildings destroyed to make room for new, which, begun and left unfinished, or completed and then abandoned, have added a series of modern ruins to those which are antique. There is not a single street, or place, or road in Saintes, which can be called finished: materials for building are scattered in all directions, and, in many parts, moss and weeds have grown up amidst the piles of stone destined to construct some new house or temple: in the meantime the streets are without pavement, or as bad,

* Since this was written, I grieve to observe, by the French newspapers, that the tower and part of the church of St. Eutrope, have been destroyed by lightning.

hollow, damp, dirty, and dreary; the houses are unpainted, slovenly, neglected, and ugly: the churches are dilapidated, or but half restored; grass grows in the newly-projected squares, and all is in a state of confusion and litter. It seems as if the task of regenerating Saintes, rebuilding it from the ground, in fact, had been undertaken in a moment of desperation, and the project had been abandoned as suddenly as conceived.

All attention seems now directed to the river side. The erection of a new quay absorbs every mind; and all the workmen that can be procured are busy hurrying to and fro, amidst the mud and water of the spot where passengers land from the steam-boat. One would wonder why any body should think of coming to Saintes at all, except from curiosity, as we did; but that it is the direct route to the Gironde; where, from Mortagne, another steam-boat, in communication with the Charente, conveys passengers to Bordeaux. Since the establishment of these boats a great change has been operated in Saintes, and probably its condition will now improve.

Notwithstanding this *too true* description of the once important capital of Saintonge, it possesses an interest which may well attract the antiquarian visitor to its walls. The ruins of the Arch and those of the Amphitheatre alone would be attraction enough for many; and as the hotels are remarkably good, clean, and comfortable, a sojourn of a

few days in Saintes will quite repay the traveller who comes, as we did, out of his way to visit its battered walls. We were not fortunate, as at La Rochelle, in the weather, for most of our excursions were performed in the midst of showers. I cannot but think, from the experience of several years' travelling, that there is even more uncertainty in the weather in France than in England; and I was particularly struck with the fact, that the nearer we approached the south, the colder, damper, and less genial it became. It is a mere absurdity to talk of the difference of our climate and that of France, in any part: it is assuredly *warmer* in England, and not a whit more changeable.

We took advantage of the first gleams, after a wet night, to explore the strange old town, once said to contain a hundred thousand inhabitants, and, both in the time of the Gauls and the Romans, to have been of the utmost importance.

The cathedral is a monument of the violence of religious fanaticism; it was almost torn to pieces by the Huguenots; in the sixteenth century, all its fine architecture was defaced, its saints dragged from their niches, and its ornaments destroyed. The principal entrance must, originally, have been very grand; but is so much injured that little but its form remains. The most remarkable part of the building is the enormous tower, which rises to a gigantic height above all the edifices of the town on the side next the river, vying with that of St. Eutrope

in the opposite quarter. This tower is supported by flying buttresses, of great strength and beauty : the Calvinists had resolved on its destruction, and had already begun its demolition, when it was represented to Admiral Coligny that the fall of so gigantic a mass would probably occasion serious accidents ; and that if it were fortified it might be turned to great advantage for the defence of the town. Fortunately, this advice was taken, and the fine tower remains in all its stupendous grandeur, with its flying buttresses, crocketed pyramids and arches, unique in their form ; it is said to be one of the largest in Europe, and one of the finest specimens of the decorated style of Gothic architecture.

The interior of the church is so much altered as to have little of the original left ; however, a few bits show how fine it must once have been : the mean buildings which formerly hemmed it in are removed, and an open space is left, which allows it to be seen to some advantage.

On the spot where once stood the capitol, the civil hospital now crowns the height, and a fine view of the country and the river may be had from that point, though the road to it is sufficiently difficult to deter one from approaching it. A fine military hospital is placed in an elevated position answering to the other. The college, founded by Henry IV., is said to be good, and the prison very admirable in its way. The rest of

the public buildings are no more to be admired than the private ones.

We remarked a very handsome house, forming one side of a neglected square, whose grand terraces and fine wings spoke it something of consequence. We found it was once the bishop's palace, but had been long left to go to ruin ; and a part of it was now used by some Sisters of Charity for a school. It was but of a piece with the rest of Saintes, desolate and degraded, and "fallen from its high estate."

St. Eutrope lay in our way to the ruins of the great amphitheatre, and we paused as we passed it at an open door, which was too tempting a circumstance to be neglected on a rainy morning, when there might be some trouble in finding the sacristan, and we rightly judged this would lead to the famous crypt, the object of admiration and surprise to antiquarians. Down a steep inclination we pursued our way towards a dark nook, and there, through an iron grating, we discovered before us the subterranean church, of immense size, and in perfect preservation ; its massive pillars and sharp-cut capitals, its high-curved roof and circular arches, all perfect, and its floor and walls undergoing restoration. We resolved to see it more in detail hereafter, and, in the meantime, went on to a lower part of the dim passage, where, turning aside, we found ourselves close to a huge well of fearful depth, all round which were ranged stone

coffins, of primitive forms, one, in particular, still preserving its cover, and of a most mysterious shape, which must have belonged to some early inhabitant of this holy pile.

While we were speculating on the subject, a voice at a distance reached our ears, requesting to know how long we intended to remain in that retreat: we returned, and found, stationed at the door by which we had entered, a young woman with pails of water by her side: she laughed good-humouredly, and remarked—"I would not disturb you as I saw you looking through the bars of the old church as I came back from drawing water; but you staid so long that I began to think it time to call out, as I must lock the door and go home now." We accordingly accompanied her out, resolving to resume our visit on our return from the Arènes, to which she directed us.

We followed a very steep path; and, keeping a range of ruined arches in view, threaded the mazes of a long lane, till we arrived at the irregular space where once stood the famous Roman amphitheatre. The diameter of this building is the same as that of Nîmes, and it, apparently, could have held about five thousand spectators: the ruins are scattered over a very large extent in confused heaps; but there are a great many vaulted arches, small and great, still standing, some covered with weeds and grass, and overhung with wild vines and flowering shrubs. There appears little doubt that here was

a Naumachia, from different discoveries that have been made of vaults which must have conducted the waters to this spot. The meadows and little hills all around are covered with remains of this once important place of amusement; and the labourer is for ever turning up, with his spade or plough, coins and capitals and broken pillars and pavement, belonging to the period of its existence.

There still exists in the centre of what was the Naumachia, a well, called La Fontaine de Sainte-Eustelle, to which miraculous virtues are even now attributed, and to which the following legend belongs :

Eustelle was the daughter of an officer high in command in Saintonge : a man of great power and severity, and a pagan : he had a particular horror of the sect called Christians, who had begun to spread themselves over the country, and were slowly, but surely, making their way. It was far different with his beautiful daughter, whose nurse having imbibed the principles of the true faith, had communicated her knowledge to her foster-child, who listened with delight to her lessons, and, from year to year, as she grew up, more than ever abhorred the superstitious observances of her father and her friends. In the huge hollow stones worshipped as gods, she saw only profanation ; and, while compelled to offer sacrifice to an imaginary deity, she in her heart addressed prayers to a superior Being, that he would condescend to

enlighten those who were led astray, and assist her in her secret faith.

It was at this period that her father resolved to bestow her in marriage on the son of Xerxes, King of Babylon ; and as the prince was shortly expected to arrive in Saintonge, he bade her prepare to receive her intended husband. Eustelle heard these tidings with despair, secretly resolving never to become the wife of a heathen, such as she was certain the Prince of Babylon must be : her tears and entreaties, however, had no effect on her father, who began to suspect her change of faith, and resolved to secure the alliance at once. Preparations on a magnificent scale were being made, and in a few days the bridegroom elect was expected to arrive, when news was suddenly brought that the prince had disappeared from his father's court, and was nowhere to be found. The father of Eustelle hastened to her chamber to prepare her for the disappointment, when, to his surprise, he found her not ; and on the couch where she usually slept a golden cross was laid ; but no one could give any account of her. The country was searched in all directions in vain ; and it was at length supposed that Eustelle had destroyed herself.

It was, however, far otherwise, for, in a cavern by the side of a fountain, on the spot where now stand the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre, Eustelle had concealed herself, having been guided thither by a shining light, which flitted before her to the

spot, and rested at the mouth of the cavern : there she was miraculously supported, drinking only of the waters of the fountain, which not only served her for nourishment, but so increased her beauty, that she was a marvel to behold. One morning, as she came forth from her cavern to perform her usual devotions at the side of the fountain, she was surprised to see a young man kneeling on the ground in devout prayer, so absorbed that he did not perceive her approach ; but as he raised his eyes, her figure becoming suddenly visible to him, he exclaimed, “ Oh, blessed Heaven ! my prayers are then heard—the Holy Virgin is herself before me ! ” Eustelle started, and amazed at his words, demanded who he was, and whether he was indeed a Christian, like herself, as his exclamation made it appear. “ Beautiful lady,” replied he, “ since you are not, as I supposed, a heavenly visitant, know that I am Eutrope, the son of the King of Babylon, fled from a marriage which I detested with a pagan of this country. I am, indeed, a Christian and a priest, and obliged to conceal my faith from the persecutors of those who hate us. The time will come when we can declare ourselves, for already we increase in numbers as in faith.”

Eustelle, as she looked upon his features and heard the soft tones of his voice, felt a momentary regret that he had been so precipitate in rejecting the supposed pagan wife offered him ; but considering such feelings a crime, she replied : “ Holy

father, you see before you one who has also fled from persecution, and sought a solitude where she can worship the only true God in safety. I am she who was destined to be your wife, had not a better fate been prepared for us both. In future, we can serve and pray, and our spirits will together praise Him, who has directed us thus to meet."

What passed in the mind of Eutrope, when he heard these words, it is difficult to say; but he resigned himself at once to the lot which was appointed for him. He built himself a hut at a small distance from the cavern, and, devoting himself to prayer and thanksgiving, he permitted his mind only to regard Eustelle in the light of a holy sister, while she on her part held him as a saint sent to confirm her in her belief. By the side of the miraculous fountain, many a time did the holy pair sit in pious converse, mutually instructing each other, while angels hovered above them, and joined in the chorus of praise which they sang.

St. Eutrope afterwards became the first bishop of Saintes, and St. Eustelle lived a recluse in her cavern, where miracles were long afterwards performed by her, and where she expired at the same moment that her holy companion suffered the martyrdom which secured him a crown of glory to all eternity.

The fête of the two saints is kept together on the 30th of April, and, for eight days after, the otherwise quiet town of Saintes is a scene of gaiety and rejoicing: a fair is held, and minstrels,

jugglers, and merchants of all kinds add to the liveliness of the scene. Why such demonstrations should be made in honour of two persons whose lives were spent in solitude and self-denial, it is somewhat difficult to understand; and how the dull, dreary, desolate, and ruined town can ever be made to wear a brilliant aspect, is equally difficult of comprehension; but such *is said* to be the case. On the morning of the fête, great honours were paid, formerly, to St. Eustelle, which are not even yet altogether discontinued. An image of the holy Virgin is suspended in the grotto near the miraculous well, and there the water is dispensed to believers in its efficacy “for a consideration.”

It is principally visited by young girls, who are anxious to secure a happy issue to an existing attachment, or to obtain, through the medium of the indulgent saint, a lover before the end of the year. The way to obtain this is to throw a pin into the fountain, and to drink a little of the water. It is not impossible, after this, that a prince of Babylon will make his appearance. Every year, however, this superstition is wearing out, and probably will soon be forgotten altogether.

The sun shone, and, the day being mild, we lingered for some time amongst these extensive ruins, climbing and exploring and looking down caverns and ravines in the rocks, beneath one of which rolls a dark stream, doubtless the source of those waters which were formerly directed into

the arena to serve the Naumachia. There is something fearful in knowing that beneath your feet, as you wander in these ruined places, exist gulphs of darkness, into which a false step amongst treacherous bushes and weeds might precipitate the unwary. We were driven from both the beauties and dangers of the spot by the beginning of a shower, and determined on making a retreat to St. Eutrope, whose enormous tower beckoned us from the hill above. We had not, however, gone many steps when the storm came down with all the impatient fury of *French rain*, and we were glad to take shelter in a wood-shed, at a house which we should have endeavoured to visit had no accident introduced us to its premises.

This house, now entirely modern, belongs to a farmer, and is called *The Côteau*; in the garden is an *oyster bank* of some extent, which is looked upon as one of several proofs that the sea once bathed the walls of Saintes; and beneath the building is a subterranean range, formerly communicating with the amphitheatre, which is distant the length of several fields from the house. As accidents might occur in consequence of the great extent and ruined state of the galleries and arches of this singular building, the proprietor has lately closed up the entrance, and there is now no possibility of exploring; but the wonders of this place have been described by different writers who have occupied themselves with the antiquities of

Saintes, of which there is so much to be said and seen that it is almost a dangerous subject to touch upon. Certainly it is a town which presents a wide field of enquiry and interest to archæologists, and as it now lies in the highway to Bordeaux, the curious may be attracted to its walls, and will be rewarded by their visit.

Then, perchance, may be fitly described by a Gally Knight, the *Camp de César*, the *Terrier de Toulon*, the *Tour de Pyrelonge*, the Aqueduct of *Font-Giraud*, the Cavern of *Ouaye-à-Métau*, the *Grand-Font-du-Douhet*, the *Font-Morillon*, the *Plantes des Neuf-puits*, all works of the Gauls and Romans, of which, wells and arches, and baths and subterranean temples, still excite the astonishment, not only of the peasants who are constantly stumbling on their remains, but of the antiquary who ventures into the long galleries and ruined chambers which speak to him of the glories of a people who once swayed the country they rendered powerful and beautiful by their architecture, the traces of which time itself cannot entirely sweep away.

We found, on visiting St. Eutrope on our return, that little interest attaches to the church itself, scarcely any part of its interior having been spared by the numerous hostilities which it has had to undergo; some parts of the exterior are, however, beautiful, and the crypt lost none of its interest on a second view. It is, after that of Chartres, the most perfect and the most extra-

ordinary in France, and formerly extended as far again as at present. The fine bold circular arches, of different sizes and heights ; the massive cylindrical pillars, the rich sharp capitals, and *still fresh* gothic character of the cornices, astonish the beholder ; it is undergoing restoration in parts, which appears sufficiently judicious. So solemn and silent was the sacristan who conducted us over this subterranean church, that we imagined for some time he was dumb, till we were undeceived on his expressing his pleasure at the small donation we bestowed on him for his trouble ; as it is somewhat difficult, at the present day, in France, to meet the exalted expectations of the numerous guides who exhibit to English travellers the lions of their towns, we were amused at the satisfaction betrayed by our silent cicerone.

The once beautiful church of Notre Dame, or S^{te}. Marie, serves now as the stables of the garrison, and all its fine remains are hidden from public view ; parts of its exterior still attract the eye, and make one regret that it has fallen into such utter decay. It was once covered with statues of great beauty, some of which remain ; but that of Geoffrey Martel, its founder, is destroyed, with a host of others, once its pride ; enough, however, is to be seen which is well worthy of attention ; but, from its present occupation, we did not do more than attempt to find it out in its degradation. The cells of the nuns are now occupied by dragoons.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRÈRE CHRÉTIEN — UTILITY OF CUSTOM-HOUSE SEARCH — BOLD
VOYAGER—PAUILLAC—BLAYE—THE GIRONDE—TALBOT—VINES—
THE LANDES—PHANTOM OF KING ARTHUR—THE WITCH-FINDER
—THE LANDES—WRECKERS.

OUR destination was now the Gironde, and we found our only plan was to set out in the middle of the night for Mortagne, where the steam-boat to Bordeaux from Royan touched for passengers. We accordingly secured our places in the *coupé*, and, having been quite punctual to the hour of twelve, we expected to begin our journey. At the appointed time, however, neither horses nor *conducteur* were to be found, and the diligence remained for a full hour beneath the trees of the *cours*, filled with its impatient passengers, without any appearance of moving. The pause was enlivened by a violent altercation between a passenger on the roof and the proprietor, which caused a great encounter of tongues, so furious that we dreaded that blows must ensue, when we heard the vociferous individual who had usurped somebody's place, favoured by the darkness, kicking

and resisting as he was dragged from his exalted station. However, as is almost always the case in France, the moment the culprit—who was loud in his threats of vengeance when too far off to execute them—descended to earth, and had an opportunity of making them good, he became mute and humble, and made his escape at once, amidst the jeers of those who had also threatened to annihilate him as soon as he was within their reach. This scene, taking place at midnight, beneath the high trees of the great avenue in the gloomy ruined town of Saintes, was sufficiently unpleasant, as there seemed less and less chance of our ever stirring from the spot, and a great probability of our arriving, at any rate, too late for the steamer at Mortagne; but a priest, who was our companion, and who seemed to have previously filled up the lonely hours of evening by potations, seemed greatly to enjoy the bustle, till a remark of mine, on the unsuitableness of the scene to one of his order, acted like magic on him, and he ceased the *swearing* and encouraging exclamations in which he had before indulged, and became as meek and demure as he probably passed for, being amongst those whose eyes he knew to be on him. He was of the order of Christian Brothers: a community by no means remarkable for the edification of their manners and demeanour.

It is customary with *conducteurs*, when very

much behind their time, to regain it by furious driving; and this being the case in our instance, we got to the inn at Mortagne in time, the boat being, as it happened, later than usual. In the midst of the rain we were obliged to obey the custom-house summons to produce our keys, in order that our trunks might be inspected, and if *bales of cotton* should be found amongst our caps and gowns, we might suffer according to our offence against the laws. After much uncording and dashing and knocking about of baggage, the person who officiated proceeded to drag open the suspected packages rather uncereemoniously. An exclamation, which one of our party made in English, seemed to put an end, however, to the search, for, looking up and bowing, he said, "Oh, English ladies,—that's enough!" Having escaped this *necessary* ceremony, we had to walk about half a mile in the mud and rain to the pier, though there was no sort of reason why the coach should not have taken us all with our goods to the shore; except, indeed, that by so convenient an arrangement, the demands of a whole host of porters would have been evaded.

We were huddled into a clumsy boat, some standing and some sitting on the wet seats, and paddled off to the steamer which stood off; our baggage strewn on the pier, to be transported hereafter, if the captain chose to wait. And in

this unpleasing state of uncertainty, at six o'clock in the morning, in a pouring rain, we were put on board the vessel which was to transport us to Bordeaux.

In spite, however, of the wondrous confusion which made it probable that accidents of all kinds would ensue, nothing tragical happened, and nothing was lost. One little stout man, in a long cloak, attached himself to our side, not so much with a view of affording us *his* protection, as to obtain it at our hands. He looked very pale and cold; and as he trudged along in the mud, addressed me frequently, in tremulous tones, requesting to know my opinion as to the state of *the ocean*; whether I did not fear that it would be very rough and very dangerous, confessing that he felt pretty sure such would be the case, though he had never seen the sea before, and hoping I would not be alarmed. I assured him I had no fears on that head, as, in the first place, wide as the expanse before us appeared, it was not the *sea*, but the *river*, several leagues from its *embouchure*; next, that it was as calm as a mill-pond, without a breath of wind to ruffle its thick yellow waters. "Hélas!" said he, "you do not seem to care; but perhaps you have no baggage as I have, otherwise you would feel great uneasiness."

I found him afterwards on board almost crying after his *effêts*, which consisted of a hat-box, carpet-bag, and little bundle, all of which were

safely produced. When we had proceeded about an hour, he came strutting up to us, and, with a patronizing air, exclaimed, "There, you see, there is no reason to be alarmed; I told you so." I gratified him exceedingly by agreeing that he was perfectly right.

The Gironde is, indeed, at this part, like the sea: the opposite shores cannot be distinguished, so broad and fine is the expanse; and the exceedingly ugly colour of the water is, at first, forgotten in the magnitude of the space which surrounds the voyager.

But that we had resolved to make ourselves acquainted with the Roman city of Saintes, we should have followed the usual course, and, on leaving Rochefort, proceeded across the country to Royan, once an insignificant village, now a rather important bathing-place. By this means the whole of the banks of the Gironde may be seen; and it is a charming voyage.

The first object of interest is the famous Tour de Corduan, built on a bank of rocks, and placed at the entrance of the river, with its revolving light to warn mariners of their position. It was originally constructed in 1548, by the celebrated engineer, Louis de Foix, whose works at Bayonne have rendered his name illustrious. Pauillac is the *chef-lieu* of the last canton of Haut-Medoc, and its port being good, many vessels, which cannot reach so high as Bordeaux, stop here, and discharge their cargo. Here grow the wines, called Château

Lafitte, and Château Latour. There is nothing very remarkable in the appearance of the town but a long pier, of which many of our passengers took advantage to land, and our steward to go to market, returning with a store of eatables, for which every one seemed quite ready. The weather had now cleared, and the aspect of things was, consequently, much brightened; and, as we approached Blaye, the skies were fine, and the air fresh and agreeable.

A group of islands, called *Les Isles de Cazau*, rises from the waters; and on one of them appears the singularly-shaped tower of Blaye, so like a *pâté de Périgord*, that it is impossible, on looking at it, not to think of Charlemagne, or his nephew, the famous paladin, Rolando, who should be the presiding genii of the scene.

All along the left bank of the river extend, in this direction, the far-famed plains of Medoc—once the haunt of wolves and wild boars, now covered with the vines renowned throughout Europe.

The first place, after Mortagne—where once stood the castle of that Jeanne de Vendôme who falsely accused Jacques Cœur—is Pauillac, a town of some commercial importance; and near is an island, called Patiras, formerly the abode of a pirate, called Monstri, whose depredations were so extensive that the parliament of Bordeaux was obliged to send a considerable naval force to put him down. But Monstri was not the only depredator who found the Gironde a fitting theatre for his piracy. Amongst all that *coquinnaille*,—as Mezeray designates the notorious Free Companies

who, after their services were no longer required to drive the English from the recovered realm of Charles VII., exercised their cruelties and indulged their robber-propensities on the people of France, wherever they came,—was a knight and a noble, who may serve as a type of those of his time, Roderigue de Villandras, known as *Le Méchant Roderigue*; together with Antoine de Chabannes, Lord of Damartin, the Bâtard de Bourbon, and others; Villandras led a troop of those terrible men, who boasted of the name of *Ecorcheurs*. It was true that, in the lawless period when the destitute *Roi de Bourges* had neither money nor power, they had done great service to his cause—as a troop of trained wolves might have done—ravaging and destroying all they came near; but the end once accomplished, the great desire of all lovers of order was to get rid of the scourge which necessity had obliged the king to endure so long. To such a pitch of insolence had these leaders arrived, that, not content with despoiling every person they met, Villandras had, at last, the effrontery to attack and pillage the baggage of the king himself, and to maltreat his people. Enraged at finding the vexations of which his suffering subjects had so long bitterly complained, come home to himself, personally, Charles resolved on vigorous measures, and gave instant command that these companies should be pursued and hunted from society: that every town and village should take up arms against them, and, as for Chabannes,

Roderigue, &c., they were banished from the kingdom. Roderigue, however, retired, with a chosen band, to the Garonne, and there, entrenching himself in one of the islands, carried on the trade of a pirate, destroying the country on each side of the river, and murdering the inhabitants without mercy.

This state of things lasted for some time: the labouring people and proprietors, unable to resist these incursions, left their land in despair, and fled for protection into the towns: the consequence of which was, that plague and famine ensued, and their miserable country became a prey to a new species of wretchedness.

In less than six weeks, fifty thousand people died in Paris alone, until the city became so emptied of inhabitants that not more than three persons were left to each street. It is recorded that famished wolves came down upon the great capital, and prowled about the streets as if they had been in a forest, devouring the bodies scattered about unburied, and attacking the few living creatures in this great desert.

Meantime, the revolt of the disaffected lords, who composed what was called the Praguerie, gave new employment to all the *mauvais sujets* of the kingdom, and Chabannes and Villandras did not neglect so fine an opportunity of committing additional outrages; and, for a time, they carried their terrors throughout Poitou and Champagne. Being taken in arms, the fearful Bâtard de Bourbon met his

deserved fate by being sewn in a sack and thrown into the river ; but Villandras escaped the justice of the king, in consideration of services required of him and his band of robbers ; and De Chabannes was reinstated in the favour of Charles, being too powerful and dangerous to offend.

One is not surprised to be told that the fortress of Blaye is called *Le Paté* : it is, doubtless, of great strength and importance, but not imposing, in consequence of its want of height, and its flat, crushed appearance on a marshy island. The exterior walls appear very ancient, but all the centre of the tower is fitted up with modern buildings, having common-looking roofs, quite destroying all picturesque effect.

The steamer made the entire tour of the island ; so that we saw the fort on every side, and presently came in full view of the town and citadel of Blaye, partly on a height and partly on a level with the river. No part of it offers any beauty ; nor does it possess features of majesty and grandeur, though its recollections cannot fail to excite interest. The Duchess of Berry must have found her sojourn in this desolate castle dismal enough : it is an excellent place for a prison ; and was, formerly, no doubt of the utmost importance to Charlemagne, as it probably continues to be to this day to the ruling powers. The body of Rolando, after the fatal day when

“ Charlemagne and all his peerage fell
At Fontarabia,”

was brought here; and, several centuries afterwards, his tomb was removed to the church of St. Seurin, at Bordeaux. King Chérébert, grandson of Clovis, has also his tomb on this rock; but no remains of it, I believe, are now shown. Our troops, in 1814, could tell of the obstinate resistance of the citadel, and were well able to measure its strength.

The banks of the river are, from hence, covered with vines, and are higher and more rocky. Numerous dwellings cut in the rocky face of the hills remind one of the same appearance on the borders of the Loire; but in no other respect can the clay-coloured river claim resemblance with that crystal though sand-encumbered stream. Several bold rocks diversify the prospect here,—one called the Roque-de-Tau, and another the Pain-de-Sucre.

The space where the two rivers, Dordogne and Garonne, meet, and falling together into one, form the Gironde, is called *L'Entre-Deux-Mers*; and the shore the Bec d'Ambez. This part is sometimes dangerous; and, I dare say, our timid fellow-voyager felt a little nervous; but nothing happened to our boat, as we fell quietly into the Garonne, leaving the sister river, and its boasted Pont de Cubzac,—the object sought by the spy-glasses of all on board,—in the distance.

We were now passing along between the shores of the famous river Garonne—always the scene of contentions, from its importance, and particularly so during the long wars between France and England

in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although but few of the castles whose turrets once frowned along the hills above the waters now remain, even in ruins, yet, in those days, they were nearly as numerous as the trees which have now taken their place. Many a time has the banner of the Black Prince been displayed on the waves of this river, and been saluted or attacked according as he was victor or besieger. Every inch of land and water, from the Tour de Corduan to the walls of Bordeaux, and, indeed, to Agen, has been disputed by struggling thousands, from the time of Elionore of Guienne to the Duke of Wellington! But it was at the time when the star of France emerged from its dark clouds, and shone above the head of Charles VII., that the French shook off the foreign yoke which had so long kept from them this — one of the finest rivers in their realms.

Charles VII., after having despoiled his friends and reduced his enemies, was endeavouring to shut out from his memory the visions of the betrayed heroine of Orleans and the persecuted merchant of Bourges, the lost Agnes Sorel and the turbulent and revolted Dauphin; and had retired to his castle of pleasure at Mehun-sur-Yevre, where he could best conceal from prying eyes the idle occupations and degrading enjoyments which filled the time of the hero *of other's swords*. He had just concluded a peace with Savoy, and had

rejected, as vexatious, the petitions of his subjects of Gascony, who were writhing under the exactions of his ministers. He felt that all was now at his feet; and he would not permit his loved ease and quiet to be disturbed by appeals to his justice and humanity. The people of Guienne, therefore, saw that it was in vain that they had submitted, and had consented to give up the English rule, to which they had been so long accustomed, and under which they had flourished. Several of the higher families allied with that country, had endured the alienation with uneasiness. Amongst others, Pierre de Montferrant, who bore the singular title of Souldich de l'Estrade, or de la Trau, had married a natural daughter of the Duke of Bedford: he had been forced to capitulate when taken prisoner at Blaye; but he preserved his ancient attachment to England; and, taking advantage of the discontent which prevailed, he sent messages to Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, recommending him to attempt the re-conquest of the Bordelais, which promised to be an easy prize.

The lords of Candale and l'Esparre confirmed his statements, in an interview with the earl, in London, where they had remained after the treaty. They assured him that, if the English landed a small force at Bordeaux, they would certainly be joined by the disaffected, and had little to contend with; for Charles had withdrawn most of his troops, to send them against Savoy, and,

it was thought, against the Dauphin himself. This was followed by the announcement that the powerful lords of Rosan, Gaillard de Durfort, Jean de la Linde, and the Sire de Langlade, with many other gentlemen of the country, had proclaimed their intention of rising as soon as the English flag should be displayed on the Garonne. The Archbishop of Bordeaux and the Bishop of Oleron had entered into the plot; for there is proof that they had solicited new favours from Henry VI. before the return of the English to Guienne.

A favourable turn in the affairs of Henry seemed to render the moment propitious; and Marguerite d'Anjou seized the occasion of success against her opponents to despatch Talbot, as the lieutenant of the king in Aquitaine, with an army of between seven and eight thousand men, with ample powers to pardon all offences committed against England. The aged chief, favoured by the wind and weather, arrived at Bordeaux, and was introduced into the city, by the citizens, before the soldiers of Charles VII. had even dreamed of his approach. The seneschal, the under-mayor, and almost all the French garrison, were instantly surprised and taken prisoners.

Talbot, delighted at his prompt success, roused all his old energy, and, in an incredibly short space of time, had retaken all the places which had been lost to the English, in the preceding year, in the Bordelais, the Agenois, and the Ba-

zadois. Eighty vessels arrived with provisions from England, and all went well with the conquerors. The French who held out were obliged to retire to their ancient frontiers, and do their utmost to defend the remainder of Guienne against the fortunate invaders.

Meantime, the King of France was dreaming away his life, as he had formerly done, while the English were lords of his kingdom; but the news of their return woke him from his slumbers, and, hurrying to Lusignan, and assembling his forces in haste, he set forth in his character of warrior, and paused not till he had reached the Dordogne. The two famous brothers Bureau brought up their sappers and miners, and their tremendous artillery; nobles and knights flocked to his standard, and Talbot found that the foe he held in utter contempt, presented an aspect of resolve worthy of his attention. The old general was about to hear mass when it was falsely announced to him that a party of his people had routed the French, who had abandoned their park of artillery, before Chatillon en Perigord. He started up, and exclaimed, as he interrupted the ceremony, "I swear that I will never hear mass again till I have swept away the French from before me." So saying, he rushed to arms, called out his troops, and marched forth with impetuosity, uttering his war-cry, "Talbot ! Saint George !"

Fatal was his haste, and fatal was the misrepresentation made to him; in the battle that ensued the gallant veteran and his son were slain, with upwards of four thousand men; the French were too much harassed to pursue their victory; but, finding the body of Talbot amongst the heaps of dead, it was proclaimed to France that their most dreaded enemy was no more.

“ Talbot is slain !—the Frenchman’s only scourge ;
Their kingdom’s terror, and black Nemesis ! ”

“ Whose life was England’s glory—Gallia’s wonder.”

The face of things was now essentially changed; all the influences were turned to the advantage of ‘ Charles the Victorious.’ One after another the towns and fortresses on the Garonne, Blancafort, Saint Macaire, Langon, Villandras, Cadillac, were forced to surrender. And all the country “ *between the two seas* ” was in the hands of the French. The Gironde was filled with vessels sent to the aid of France by Castile, Burgundy, Bretagne, and all the province of Poitou. On the other hand, the fleet of England and the Bourdelaise were at anchor half a league below Bordeaux, and formidable did both appear.

The men of Bordeaux beginning to fear that all was lost, had already proposed a surrender, on condition of free pardon; but the answer of Charles had not been favourable; he consented to receive all of English birth to ransom, but those

of his own subjects he insisted should be left to his mercy. While they paused, reflecting upon the amount of mercy they might expect, the English, careful only of their own weal, decided for them, and agreed to the terms, leaving the unfortunate Gascons, their companions in arms, to their fate.

Charles began by putting to death Gaillardet, the brave commander of Cadillac; whom he condemned as a rebel, although he had merely done his duty in obeying the head of a house which his ancestors had been accustomed to serve for three centuries.

The fevers of Autumn had now begun to appear; several of the generals of the French king had fallen victims to it; and as Bordeaux still held out and refused to surrender without certain concessions, dictated by Le Camus, who refused to sacrifice the Gascons under his command, Charles was obliged to listen to his representations. He agreed to pardon the citizens and their adherents, reserving twenty of the most guilty, whose estates were confiscated, and they banished for ever from the kingdom.

It was on the 19th of October, 1453, that the City of Bordeaux opened its gates to Charles *the Well-Served*, and the discomfited English sailed mournfully away from its walls, never to return as its masters.

All the vines along the shores of the Garonne are

famous. Cantemerle, Sauves, Cantenac, and the mighty monarch, Château Margaux; Ludon, Param-puire, and Blanquefort; St. Louis de Montferrant, and Bassens. These renowned vineyards cover the country with riches; but fever reigns here triumphant throughout the year, and the coast denies its advantages to any but vine-growers.

M. de Peyronnet, the ex-minister, has a château in a pretty situation on the river; but whether this particular site is unhealthy we did not hear.

From the Tour de Cordouan to the Port of Bordeaux, extending far over the wide and marshy country, which spreads out its sandy and unhealthy plains towards Bayonne, superstition formerly held her head-quarters; and though, within a few years, belief in the supernatural has lost its force, the dreams and fancies of the dark ages are not quite effaced. There is hardly any extravagance credited by the inhabitants of Brittany, which has not been held as an article of faith in the Landes, and cast its influence over the departments bordering on the Pyrenées.

There is an idea, not altogether worn out, that certain families are under a spell, and subject to strange visitations; they are supposed to be recognized by their heavy, sullen air, and their aversion to society in general: these are called *Accus*, and are as much avoided as possible, as they are suspected of witchcraft and other mal-practices; they are said to have too much experience in the

nocturnal amusements of those mysterious beings called Loups-garoux, so generally known and dreaded throughout France and Germany.

That the evil one delights in this part of the country is not to be questioned; and there may be some risk in passing along the river towards nightfall, because the fiend and his company are apt to haunt those meadows closest to the waters, and there they may be occasionally seen dancing in circles, where their hoofs spoil the grass, which refuses to grow again where once their steps have been. Perhaps the rapidity of the steam-boat may now prevent their being so often perceived; or, indeed, its introduction may have offended, and chased away, the *mesnie* of the fiend altogether.

Between the Dordogne and the Garonne, l'Entre-deux-Mers, it is generally believed that a male child who has never known his father, as well as a *fifth* son, have the power to cure certain maladies by the touch. And it is in these parts that the once famous Dragon of Bordeaux used principally to sojourn, much to the terror of the surrounding neighbourhood. There is scarcely any malignant spirit, from a *loup-garou* to an *ague*, which cannot be found in the deserts of Aquitaine.

Often do the peasants of Medoc hear in the air, sometimes in mid-day, sometimes in the clear nights of summer, the horns and cries of the phantom hunter, Arthur and his men. If he is, indeed, the same King Arthur, whose fame is

enshrined in the legends of Wales and Brittany, he must have been a prince with even a more extended domain than that of Henry, the husband of Queen Elionore, for he carries on his chace on the banks of the Gave of Pau, and still further into the Pyrenees. He was a very excellent and pious prince, valiant and courteous; but he had one great fault, an inordinate love of hunting, which in the end proved his bane. For once, on the occasion of some solemn fête, while he was in the church assisting at the mass, some mischievous friend brought him word, that a fine wild boar had just appeared at a very short distance from the holy precincts. In a moment, his respect for religion, his reverence for the sacred ceremony in which he was engaged, all were put to flight; he uttered a joyous shout, seized his spear, and rushed forth to the sport. He enjoyed a most animated hunt, but—

“ So comes the reck’ning when the banquet’s o’er,—
A dreadful reck’ning—and men smile no more ! ”

From that day he *hunted eternally* and *in vain*!—for ever is he traversing the vast field of air, urging on his steed, hallowing to his hounds, sounding his horn, and madly rushing over mountain and plain, reflected in the sky; but he has never yet, nor ever will attain the object of his pursuit !

There are certain spots in the Landes where trees of strange appearance grow, which may be recognised

as those under which the evil one distributes poison to his human friends, to dispense to those who have fallen under their displeasure: the districts where these meetings take place are fortunately known and avoided, but to such a height had grown the daring of the friends of Satan at one time, that the King of France,—no other than Henry the Fourth (!)—under the ministry of Sully (!) sent persons into these climes to root out the evil. The famous *witch-finder*, Pierre de Lancre, has recorded his successes in this particular.

“The King,” says he, “being informed that his country of Labourt was greatly infested with sorcerers, gave commission to a president and a counsellor of the court of parliament of Bordeaux, to seek out the crime of sorcery in the said country, about the year 1609.

“This commission was entrusted to the *Sieur Despagnet* and I: we dedicated four months to the search, during which happened an infinity of *unknown things, strange, and out of all belief*, of which books written on the subject have never spoken: such for instance, as *that the devil came and held his meetings at the gates of Bordeaux, and in the quarter of the Palais Gallien*, which *fact* was declared at his execution by *Isaac Dugueyran*, a notable sorcerer, *who was put to death* in 1609. It appears to me that it will be extremely useful, nay necessary, to France and the whole of Christendom, to have this account in writing for many reasons.

“ All this must convince the most obstinate, stupid, blind, and *ignorant*, that there is no longer a doubt that sorcery exists, and that the devil can transport sorcerers really and corporally to his sabbath: and that there is no longer any excuse for disputing on the subject, for all nations are agreed concerning the truth, aided by *ocular* demonstration, permitted to an impartial judge and good Christian. *Too much mildness is shown in France towards sorcerers: all good judges should in future resolve to punish with death all such as have been convicted of attending the devil’s assemblies, even if no harm has immediately resulted therefrom: for to such an extent has witchcraft spread that it has passed the frontier and reached the city of Bayonne, which is cruelly afflicted in consequence. Satan having made great advances and spread his sabbaths over an infinity of places in our deserts and Landes of Bordeaux.*”*

In consequence of the representations of this righteous judge, *eight hundred victims* were condemned to the flames for this pretended crime: and this, incredible as it may appear, by command of Le Bon Henri and his Protestant minister, Sully ! At the very period, too, permission was refused to the unfortunate Moors, then driven by bigotry from Spain, to establish themselves in the Landes; where

* This part of the world seemed always to be looked upon as the head quarters of sorcery ; for in the Chronicles of Bordeaux we find, in the year 1435, the following notice :—“ Les environs de Bordeaux sont *fort travaillez* par les sorciers et empoisonneurs, dont aucuns furent exécutez à mort et brûlé tous vifs.”

their industry and perseverance would soon have converted the barren waste into a fertile and smiling country, instead of remaining for centuries an unwholesome marsh.

Neglected and uncultivated as this extended country has long been—only *now*, in fact, assuming an aspect of improvement—it is not surprising that superstition has lingered longer amongst its uneducated people than with their more fortunate neighbours. Within ten years new roads have been made, new buildings erected, and a rail-road is projected across the Landes from Bordeaux to Bayonne: it may, therefore, be now expected that the last vestige of idle belief in witches and demons will shortly disappear; but, in the meantime, much of such weakness is lingering still. For instance, the Landais believe that in certain maladies the physician has no power, and that recourse must be had, for relief, to certain gifted persons, who will propitiate the evil spirit who caused the ill. They attribute great virtue to what they call *les Veyrines*, namely, narrow openings in the thickness of the pillars of a church: persons affected with rheumatic diseases, have only to pass through these narrow spaces, repeating at the time certain prayers, having previously made the circuit of the pillar nine times. His head is first inserted, and the rest of his body is pushed through by his friends. These practices are, in spite of the exertions of the clergy, said to be still carried on in secret.

In the month of May they strew the street before their houses with reeds, on fête days, and there they frequently pass their evenings, sitting in groups, and telling to each other superstitious stories, which are eagerly listened to, and thus handed down from father to son.

The *orfraie* and the screech-owl are looked upon with terror in the Landes: their approach to any dwelling bodes evil in all forms: the dead quit their tombs at night and flit about in the fens, and covered with their white shrouds come wandering into the villages, nor will they quit them till the prayers and alms of their friends have calmed their perturbed spirits.

The various tribes of the Landes, form, as it were, in the midst of France, a separate people, from their habits and customs: they are called, according to their locality, Bouges, Parants, Mazansins, Couziots, or Lanusquets: they are generally a meagre race, and subject to nervous affections; taking little nourishment, and living a life of privation and fatigue. Obligated to labour for their support, like most people in the departments of the Pyrenees, and to dispose of the products of their industry, they have usually fixed places of repose; each peasant drives his cart drawn by two oxen, and carries with him the food for those patient animals, who are the very picture of endurance. His own food is generally coarse, ill-leavened bread, very hardly baked, and made of coarse maize, or rye-flour, which he sometimes

relishes with *sardines* of Galicia. He gives his oxen a preparation of dried linseed from which the oil has been extracted, and which he has made into flour, and he then lets them loose on the Landes for a time, while he snatches a hasty sleep, soon interrupted to resume his journey. The dwellings of these people are sufficiently wretched : low, damp, and exposed to both the heat and cold by the rude manner in which they are constructed; a fire is kept in the centre of the principal room, from which small closets open : they sleep in general under two *feather beds*, in a close, unwholesome air, many in the same room. Still their domestic arrangements seem a degree better than those of the Bretons, and their dirt does not appear so great, bad as it must necessarily be.

The dress of the men is a large, heavy, brown stuff cloak, or a long jacket of sheepskin, with the fur outwards ; to which, when gaiters of the same are added, there is little difference between them and the animals they tend: a very small *berret*, the cap of the country, covers merely the top of their heads, and is but of little use in sheltering them in rainy weather. The women wear large round hats with great wings, adorned with black ribbon, and sometimes with a herb, which they call *Immortelle de Mer*;* the young girls frequently, however, prefer a small linen cap, the wings of which are crossed over the top of the head.

* See for these particulars, Athanasie Maritime.—*Du Mége*.

Shepherds are almost always clothed in sheepskins, and in winter they wear over this a white woollen cloak with a very pointed hood. These are the people who make their appearance on stilts, called *Xicanques*, and traverse the Landes with their flocks, crossing streams of several feet deep, and striding along like flying giants. They have always a long pole, with a seat affixed, and a gun slung at their backs, to defend them from the attack of wolves. Monotonous enough must be the lives of these poor people, for months together, alone, in a solitary waste, where not a tree can grow, with nothing but a wide extent of marshy land around, and only their sheep and dogs as companions; but they are accustomed to it from infancy, and probably are comparatively insensible to their hardships, at least it is so to be hoped. Seated on his elevated seat, the shepherd of the Landes occupies himself in knitting or spinning, having a contrivance for the latter peculiar to this part of the country. Their appearance, thus occupied, is most singular and startling.

A dignitary of Bordeaux is said once to have prepared a fête to an Infanta of Spain, the destined bride of a French prince, in the Landes; in which he engaged a party of these mounted shepherds, dressed in skins, and covered with their white mantles and hoods, to figure, accompanied by a band of music, and passing under triumphal arches formed of garlands of flowers: a strange scene in

such a desert, but scarcely so imposing to a stranger as the unexpected apparition of these beings in the midst of their native desolation.

The Landais seldom live to an advanced age: they marry early, are very jealous, and are said to enjoy but little of the domestic happiness attributed to the poor as a possession; they are accused of being indifferent to their families, and of taking more care of their flocks and herds than of their relations: they are docile and obedient to authority; honest, and neither revengeful nor deceitful.

Whether from affection or habit, they show great sensibility on the death of neighbours or friends. The women cover their heads, in the funeral procession, with black veils or aprons, and the men with the pointed hood and cloak. During the whole year, after the decease of a father or mother, all the kitchen utensils *are covered with a veil, and placed in an opposite direction to that in which they stood before*; so that every time anything is wanted the memory of the dead is revived.

The Landais, on the sea-coast, are, like the Cornish people, reproached, perhaps falsely, with being *wreckers*; and their cry of “Avarech! Avarech!” is said to be the signal of inhumanity and plunder.

Their marriages are attended with somewhat singular ceremonies, and their method of making love is equally strange: after church, on a fête day, a number of young people, of both sexes, dance to-

gether to a monotonous tune, while others sit round in a circle on their heels, watching them. After dancing a little time, a pair will detach themselves from the rest, squeeze each other's hand, give a few glances, and then whisper together, striking each other at the same time; after which they go to their relations, and say they *are agreed*, and wish to marry: the priest and notary are called for, the parents consent, and the day is at once fixed.

On the appointed day, the *Nobi* (future husband) collects his friends, and goes to the bride's house, where he knocks; the father, or some near relation, opens to him, holding by the hand an *old woman*, whom he presents: she is rejected by the bridegroom, who demands her who was promised. She then comes forward with a modest air, and gives her lover a flower; who, in exchange, presents her with a belt, which he puts on himself. This is very like the customs in Brittany, where scenes of the kind always precede weddings.

When the bride comes to her husband's house, she finds at the door a broom; or, if he takes possession of her's, a ploughshare is placed there: both allegorical of their duties. The distaff of the bride is carried by an old woman throughout the ceremonies.

The Landais, altogether, both as to habits, manners, and general appearance, form a singular feature in the aspect of this part of France.

CHAPTER XV.

PORTS — DIVONA — BORDEAUX — QUINCONCES — ALLÉES — FIRST IMPRESSION — CHARTRONS — BAHUTIER — BACALAN — QUAYS — WHITE GUIDE — STE. CROIX — ST. MICHEL — ST. ANDRÉ — PRETTY FIGURE — PRETTY WOMEN — PALAIS GALLIEN — BLACK PRINCE'S SON EDWARD.

TAVERNIER has said, in speaking of the most celebrated ports, "three only can enter into comparison, one with the other, for their beauty of situation and their *form of a rainbow*, viz., Constantinople, Goa, and Bordeaux." The poet, Chapelle, thus names this celebrated city:—

Nous vîmes au milieu des eaux
Devant nous paraître Bordeaux,
Dont le port en croissant resserre
Plus de barques et de vaisseaux
Qu'aucun autre port de la terre."

The commendatory address to his native city, by the poet, Ausonius, is often quoted; and has been finely rendered by M. Jouannet, whom I venture to translate.

I was to blame; my silence far too long
Has done thy fame, my noble country, wrong:

Thou, Bacchus-loved, whose gifts are great and high,
Thy gen'rous sons, thy senate, and thy sky,
Thy genius and thy grace shall Mem'ry well
Above all cities, to thy glory, tell.
And shall I coldly from thy arms remove,
Blush for my birth-place, and disown my love?
As tho' thy son, in Scythian climes forlorn,
Beneath the Bear with all its snows was born.
No, thy Ausonius, Bordeaux ! hails thee yet ;
Nor, as his cradle, can thy claims forget.
Dear to the gods thou art, who freely gave
Their blessings to thy meads, thy clime, thy wave :
Gave thee thy flow'rs that bloom the whole year through,
Thy hills of shade, thy prospects ever new,
Thy verdant fields, where Winter shuns to be,
And thy swift river, rival of the sea.

Shall I describe thy mighty walls revered,—
Thy ramparts, by the god of battle feared,—
Thy gates,—thy towers, whose frowning crests assay
Amidst the clouds towards Heaven to force a way?
How well I love thy beauties to behold,
Thy noble monuments, thy mansions bold,
Thy simple porticos, thy perfect plan,
Thy squares symmetrical : their space, their span.
And that proud port which Neptune's lib'ral hand
Bade from thy startled walls its arms expand,
And show the way to Fortune ! Twice each day
Bringing his floods all crown'd with glittering spray,
And foaming from the oar, while, gleaming white,
A host of vessels gaily sweep in sight.

It would appear by this description, that Bordeaux was, under its Roman masters, a very magnificent city ; the famous *Divona*, the beneficent fountain, so celebrated by Ausonius, has left no trace of its existence, and has employed the learned long to account for its disappearance. Probably it

was from some plan of Roman Bordeaux, that the present new town was built; for the above lines might almost describe it as it now stands: certainly, except the gigantic towers, the *old* city has no claim to praise for wide streets, fine houses, porticos, or symmetrical squares; probably, the architects of the Middle Ages destroyed its *perfect plan*, and swept away most of the beauties and grandeur which inspired the muse of the classic minstrel.

Like most pompous descriptions, this was, perhaps, overdrawn at the time as much as, it appeared to me, the accounts of modern travellers have exaggerated the effect of a first arrival by water at Bordeaux.

As Bordeaux is approached, the banks on one side become more picturesque, and at Lormont, where was once an extensive monastery, the scenery is fine: its promise is, however, forgotten by degrees, and I was surprised not to see any fine houses on the banks, as I had understood was the case. The few that are seen have a slovenly, neglected appearance, by no means announcing the splendours and riches of the great mercantile city we had now nearly reached. Paltry wine-houses, with shabby gardens, border the river, and flat meadows and reclaimed marshes give a meagre effect to the whole scene.

Mast after mast now, however, began to appear, and in a short time we were steaming along

between a forest of vessels of all nations, the reading of whose names not a little amused us as we hurried by them. English, Russian, Dutch, French, succeeded each other; the *coup d'œil* was extremely imposing, and the long wide quays, which seemed to know no end, announced a city of great importance. The small steamer continued its way, more fortunate than that which arrives from England, which, from its size, cannot go far up the shallow river, and stops half a league from the town at a faubourg called Barcalan; but we were enabled, from our comparative insignificance, to reach to the very finest point of Bordeaux, and land at the foot of the grand promenade *Des Quinconces*—the glory of the Garonne.

The extreme flatness of the town, built as it is on marshes, takes from its effect; and I was surprised that it struck me as so little deserving its great reputation, compared, as it has been, to Genoa, Venice, and Constantinople, and imagining, as I did, that I should see its buildings rising in a superb amphitheatre from the waves, and crowning heights, like those we had passed, with towers and spires. The quays, also, had been so much vaunted to me that I expected much finer mansions on their sides; whereas they are principally warehouses, and those not very neatly kept: there was little of the bustle and stir of business which one, accustomed to London, may picture: all seemed sufficiently quiet and still, except the clamour of

the commissioners, who contended for the possession of the passengers in our vessel, whose arrival in this commercial port made much more stir than seemed reasonable in so great a city.

The *immense* space of the Quinconces passed, we crossed an *immense* street to an *immense* irregular square, from whence lead *immensely* wide *cours* in various directions ; and we stood before one of the largest theatres in one of the widest spaces I ever saw in a town : here, after much contention with our vociferous attendants, we resolved to pause, choosing the hotel the nearest to this magnificent building, and which promised to be most airy and quiet ; the river running at the bottom of the long street in which it was situated, the theatre before it, and the great square left at its side, with all its rattle of carts and wheelbarrows, and screaming commissioners. In the handsome, clean Hôtel de Nantes we were accordingly deposited, and had reason to congratulate ourselves on our choice while we staid at Bordeaux.

It appears almost heresy to every one in France to find fault with Bordeaux, which it is the custom to consider all that is grand, magnificent, and beautiful ; yet, if I were to be silent as to my impressions, I should feel that I was scarcely honest. We stayed nearly a fortnight at Bordeaux, and, in the course of that time, had a variety of weather, good and bad ; so that I think we could

not be influenced by the gloom which at first, unexpectedly, damp, chill and uncongenial skies spread around. A few days were very brilliant, but still the waters of the Garonne kept their thick orange hue, without brilliancy or life, and this circumstance alone suffices to prevent the great city from deserving to be called attractive. The quays on its banks are extremely wide; but, except for a short space on each side the Quinconces, the houses which border them are no finer nor cleaner than in any other town in France; the pavement is very bad near them, and there are no *trottoirs* in this part: incumbrances of all sorts cover the quays in every direction, so that free walking is impossible; and the irregularity of the pavement next the river is so great that it is constantly necessary to resume the rugged path on the stones, among the bullock-carts and market-people, who frequent this part in swarms at all times of the day. The bridge is extraordinarily long, over the clay-coloured river, but appears too narrow for its great length, and the entrances to it struck me as poor and mean. From the centre is the best view of the town; but, though very *singular*, from the strange shapes of its towers and spires, the mass of dark irregular buildings it presents cannot be called fine. The hills on the opposite side relieve the extreme flatness; but there is no remarkable effect of the picturesque amongst them.

The boast of Bordeaux is its wide *allées*, which

are avenues of trees, bordered with uniform houses of great size; its enormous square next the river surrounded with a grove of trees; its theatre, certainly magnificent, and its wide *spaces*, not to be called *squares*. The new town is *all space*; and if in space consists grandeur, it cannot be denied that there is a great deal of it; but, to me, these wide, rambling places appeared ungraceful and slovenly, wet and exposed in winter, and glaring and dusty in summer. The splendid theatre stands in one corner of a great space, from which several wide streets diverge: some old and dark, some new. The best street, the Rue du Chapeau Rouge, which is of great width, runs along on one side; it is short, but continued, with another name, across the Place, and leads from one end of this part of the town to the other. There is a good deal of foot-pavement in this street, and here are the smartest shops; but, compared with Paris or London, or any great English town, they are contemptible.

The fine Allées de Tourny traverse the town in the form of a star, and the rays meet in a great square, —the Place Dauphine—which, if cleaner and less neglected, would be extremely magnificent. The Place Tourny and the Place Richelieu are also fine openings; and there are said to be no less than forty public squares altogether, which must give a good circulation to the air in most parts.

The old town is, however, close, dirty, damp and dingy, beyond all others that I have ever seen, and,

in common with all the *new* part of Bordeaux, the worst paved, perhaps, of any in France. Here it is crowded enough, and forms a singular contrast with the deserted appearance of the gigantic squares in the sister town.

Nevertheless, although I am by no means able to agree in attributing extraordinary beauty to Bordeaux, there is no denying that there is much to be astonished at in its magnitude, and to congratulate its inhabitants upon, in the facilities afforded them of enjoying the air in streets which would be shady, from the trees on each side, if they were not so wide; in alleys and walks apparently interminable, where the whole population can promenade, if they please, without appearing crowded; in squares where they may lose themselves; and the most magnificent theatre in Europe, which they generally neglect for several smaller in other parts of the town.

Still it appears to me impossible to forget that Bordeaux is built on a marsh, and is surrounded by immense marshes, for leagues; and that, go out of it which way you will, there is no fine country nor any agreeable views. All its alleys and gardens are flat and formal, and all in the midst of the town itself, surrounded by colossal houses, and only bounded by a thick clayey river, which it is unpleasing for the eye to rest upon.

The sight of several of the most admired and important towns in France, has reconciled me, in

a singular degree, with that of Tours, whose fame appeared to me, when I first saw it, to be undeserved. I judged, as one accustomed to English splendour, and English neatness, and I scarcely gave Tours all the credit it deserved. When I compare the clear, rapid, sparkling Loire—shallow though it be—with the ugly waters of the sluggish Garonne, I feel that it is indeed superior to most other French rivers; and when I recollect the long, broad, extensive street which divides Tours into two parts, is paved throughout, and connects it with a bridge of noble proportions and most splendid approach, I am not surprised that Tours is so much the object of a Frenchman's pride; and I confess, that, if I had seen it after the boasted city of Bordeaux, its river, and its bridge, I should have found little to find fault with; for though it lies in a plain, it is not a marsh; and though it is glaring and flat, it is dry and sandy, and not damp and unwholesome.

Bordeaux is—notwithstanding that it failed to impress me with a sense of admiration of its *beauty*—full of interest in every way, and worthy of the most minute inspection and examination. We scarcely neglected a single street, of all its mazes, and scarcely left unvisited a single monument. As in all other French towns, building is actively going on, and new public works are in progress: some on a very grand scale. The antique buildings, so curious from their history,

have, in spite of repeated wars and the efforts of time, preserved a great deal of their original appearance, and some of them are as fine as any to be found in France. Amongst these, is the Portal of St. Seurin, and the façade of St. Michel and St. André.

Bordeaux is a city which seems to belong to two periods, totally unlike each other. The old town, full of old houses—one of which, called



Le Bahutier, is a specimen of others—is an historical monument of the Middle Ages, while the new is an epitome of La Jeune France, with all its ambitious aspirations, its grand conceptions, and its failures. There is no attempt, in the restoration

of French towns in general, to bring the new style as near the old as possible ; on the contrary, it would seem that modern architects were only glad of the vicinity of antique fabrics, in order that they might show how superior was their own skill, and how far they could deviate from the original model. In Bordeaux, this is very striking. It appears as if the new city ought to have been built by itself on another site, leaving the gloomy recesses of the ancient city to themselves, for all that now surrounds it is incongruous and inharmonious.

Taken by itself, modern Bordeaux is to be admired ; but, backed and flanked as it is by a dense mass of blackened buildings belonging to another age, it is singularly out of keeping.

All the way from the great square of the Quinconces, with its Rostral pillars, to the port of Bacalan, a series of wide quays border the broad river ; the Quai des Chartrons is considered one of the finest in France, and, for commercial purposes, no doubt is so. Some parts of these quays are bordered with trees, and, from the river, have a good effect. The whole of this faubourg is on a grand scale. The appellation of Chartrons, is said to be derived from Chartreux, a convent of that order having existed here. The inhabitants of this quarter call themselves *Chartronnais*, and a remarkable difference is supposed to exist between them,

both in countenance and manners, and those of the other Bordelais. It is a common expression to say, *on va Chartronner*, when a person takes a walk along the quay. We had occasion to do so several times, as we were expecting friends from England, who were to arrive by the packet, not long established between Southampton and Bordeaux, and, on one occasion, on reaching the village of Bacalan, we hoped to be able to while away the time of waiting, by a walk into fields, or by some path near the river; but our hopes were in vain; there seem never to be any walks or paths in fields, lanes, or by rivers, in France, except in Normandy; no one cares, or is expected to care, for anything but the high road, or the public promenade. The fields are generally marshy, and the borders of the streams impracticable; except, therefore, one has a taste for rough pavement, or can admire long ranges of warehouses, of great size, the best way is to remain stationary, as we did, if necessity calls one to Bacalan, seated on felled trees, under the shade of others growing by the river, careless of inodorous vicinity or dust.

We were surprised to find that the expected arrival of the packet from England created no sort of interest in any one's mind in Bordeaux; but this fact was explained, when we heard that it was a private undertaking of English merchants, which, as it interfered with the vessels to Havre,

was by no means popular, and was little likely, in the end, to answer. The same thing has been several times attempted in Bordeaux, but has always been abandoned, not meeting with encouragement, although it would seem to be a great convenience to persons visiting the South of France. It was not thought that the steam-boat we were expecting would make many more voyages, and, to judge by the small number of passengers who arrived by it, there was little reason to expect that it could be made to answer.

In order to become well acquainted with the quays of Bordeaux, we made a pilgrimage along their whole extent, by following the line, on the other side of the Quinconces, as far as the old church of Sainte Croix—one of the most ancient, as well as most curious, in Bordeaux. Our remarks, and frequent pauses, on our way, as we passed the ends of different streets which we destined for future explorings, attracted the attention of a person whom, as he had an intelligent face, we addressed, begging him to direct us in our way to Sainte Croix, as we began to think it could not be so very far from the point where we started, and we feared we might have to retrace our steps over the uneasy pavement. Our new acquaintance assured us, however, we were in the right road, and with great zeal began to describe to us how many more ends of streets we must pass

before we should reach the desired spot. His costume was somewhat singular, and we might have taken him for a character in the Carnival,—if it had been the proper season—or one *voué au blanc*, for he was entirely dressed in white, cap and all, following, we presume, the calling of a baker or a mason. He expressed his pleasure that we thought it worth while to go and see *his* poor old church of Sainte Croix, for he came from that *quartier*, and had a fondness for it: “It is past contradiction,” said he, “the most ancient and beautiful in Bordeaux, though I say it, and deserves every attention, though it has been dreadfully battered about at different times. People have tried to run it down, and have asserted that the sculpture on its façade, represented *des bêtises*; but all that has now disappeared. It was built in the time of the Pagans, when the Protestant religion—to which,” he continued, bowing, “no doubt you belong—was unknown, and when they were ignorant, and did many improper things. But, I assure you, now, you will find the old arches very interesting; the church has been restored, and is in very good condition. But that I have pressing business another way, I should have made it a duty and a pleasure to have been your guide, and pointed out the beauties of the old place to you; but, as I cannot do so, I recommend you to the politeness of any one, on your route,

for all will consider themselves honoured in indicating to you the exact position of the church, which is still at some distance.”

So saying, our white spirit, pulling off his night-cap again, and, with many bows, disappeared down a dark alley, carrying his refinement to the doors of his customers. He must have been a good specimen of the urbanity and good manners of his class in Bordeaux, and certainly no finished cavalier could have expressed himself better. We had not gone far before he re-appeared, to beg us not to forget, on our return, to visit the church of St. Michel. We promised to neglect nothing, and parted.

Sainte Croix does indeed deserve a visit from the curious, though the lovers of neatness would be somewhat shocked at the extraordinary state of filth and slovenliness in which the area of ruin where it stands is left. To look on either side of the path which leads to the façade would cause feelings of disgust almost fatal to even antiquarian zeal, and the wretched dilapidation of the space formerly occupied by the immense convent once flourishing here cannot be described. The Saracens, it seems, destroyed great part of the church and convent, which dates from the seventh century, or earlier, and one would imagine it had remained in the same state of ruin ever since; though it has probably been rebuilt and re-destroyed fifty times.

Much still remains, in spite of all the efforts of

time and force, to make Sainte Croix an object of singular interest; some of the circular arches are quite perfect, with their zig-zag ornaments, as freshly cut and sharp as possible; many of the pillars of the interior remain in their original state—huge blocks out of which the columns have not yet been carved, in the same manner as those at St. Alban's Abbey, in Hertfordshire. Some of the string-courses are interrupted, being adorned with foliage and other ornaments to a certain distance, and then stopping suddenly, as if an incursion of new barbarians had frightened the workmen from their labours. The space of the church is extremely fine, the roof lofty, and the whole imposing; what is left of the exterior of the principal entrance is very beautiful; but the carved figures round the door-way are scarcely distinguishable; many of them were, it is said, removed not long since, having been considered objectionable, and not calculated to inspire piety in the beholders.

All the tombs and relics of this famous abbey have disappeared, and no one can now read the epitaph on St. Maumolin, Abbé of Fleury, by whose zeal the bones of St. Benedict were brought to Sainte Croix, and who was of singular piety; here he was buried, says his chronicler, at the age of *three hundred and seventy years*.

From Sainte Croix we directed our steps towards St. Michel, whose giant tower had attracted us on

our way, but, deterred by the extraordinary filthiness and closeness of the nearest streets leading to it, we chose a very circuitous route, outside the former enclosure of the town ; and, by this means, came unexpectedly on a large building of very imposing appearance, which we found was the Abattoir : we did not care to linger long near this place, but escaped, as soon as we could, from the droves of bullocks which we met patiently plodding their way to their doom. For a considerable distance we followed the walls, which had all the appearance of being of Roman construction ; and, dirty as our walk was, we could not but prefer the free air in this part to the interior : we had frequently occasion to ask our way, and invariably met with marked civility ; every one leaving their work to run forward, and point out to us the nearest point we wished to reach. It appeared as if we should never gain the entrance to this immense town again, so many streets and alleys and gates did we pass ; at length we came to one which was to lead us down to St. Michel. Long boulevards did we traverse in this direction, handsome and open ; and in one part we were followed for some time by a regiment going out to exercise with one of the finest bands I ever heard, which, echoing along the extended parade, had a very splendid effect.

We reached at length the church of St. Michel, the caverns of the tower of which are remarkable

for their power of preserving the bodies buried in them from putrefaction ; ranges of skeletons, still covered with the dried flesh, hideous and fearful, scowl on the intruder from their niches, and present a most awful spectacle. The belfry has often served, in times of civil war, as a beacon-tower, dominating, as it does, the whole country and town ; it is of the most marvellously-gigantic construction, and appears to have been originally highly ornamented. It stands isolated from the church itself, whose façades present the most exquisite beauties ; and are singularly preserved at every entrance. The principal façade, however, is the most perfect as well as the most beautiful ; its rose window, its ranges of saints, its pinnacles, and wreathed arches, are as much to be admired as any in France, and rivet the attention by the delicacy and minuteness of their details. Its date is of the twelfth century, and the utmost taste and cost were bestowed on its construction ; although, on the side of the tower there is a space filled with trees, and unencumbered, yet it is to be regretted that, on the side next the chief entrance, the church is blocked up with the houses of a dark, narrow, and filthy street, so that its beauties are sadly hid. Surely it would have been worth while to have cleared away the encumbrances which surround this fine building, so as to show it well, instead of much that has been done in the way of addition in the new town.

The only comparatively modern church in Bordeaux, which is much vaunted, is Notre Dame, erected in 1701 ; it is lofty, and large, and of Grecian architecture ; but did not impress me with any feelings of admiration ; and it stands at the end of a narrow street in a corner, shown to little more advantage than the neglected St. Michel itself.

Before the cathedral of St. André, which we next visited, a space has been cleared away ; and at St. Seurin, also, where a grove of trees has been planted, which adds greatly to the venerable appearance of the building.

St. André is of the thirteenth century, and is wonderfully magnificent and curious. Its tower, called De Payberland, stands alone, like that of St. Michel ; and is only less stupendous than that wonder of architecture. The size and height of the aisles and choir are amazing, and the nave of the choir is bold and grand in the extreme. The two spires of the southern portal are of great beauty, and the whole fabric is full of interest, though scarcely a tomb remains. There are, however, several exquisitely-carved canopies where tombs have been, and, standing close to one of the large pillars behind the choir, is a group which excited my utmost interest ; it seems to represent the Virgin and St. Anne, but might have another meaning. A figure in a nun's habit stands close against a pillar

in a niche, and by her side is a little girl of about eleven years of age, in the full costume of the thirteenth century, one of whose hands touches her robe, and who appears under her protection. This charming little figure represents what might well be a young princess in flowing robes; the upper one is gathered up, and its folds held under one arm: her waist is encircled by a sash, the ends of which are confined by tassels. A necklace of beads is round her neck; the body of her gown is cut square. Her hair hangs in long thick tresses down her back, and over her shoulder, and is wreathed with jewels. A small cap, *delicately plaited*, covers the fore-part of her head, and a rich wide band of pearls and gems surmounts it. The features are very youthful, but with a grave majesty in their expression; the attitude is queenly, and the whole statue full of grace and simplicity. The nun has a melancholy, benevolent cast of features, inferior in style to the little princess, but extremely pleasing.

I imagined this to be the effigy of Elionore, the young heiress of Aquitaine, under the care of a patron saint; and, thinking the pretty group was in marble, had visions of the queen of Henry II. having erected these figures in her life-time, in the cathedral which she built; but, on requesting a person, on whose judgment I could rely, to examine it for me, he discovered that the whole was *only plaster*; and, consequently, as he added in the

language of an antiquarian, "presenting no possible interest." I gave up my theory with reluctance; although I ought to have been certain that, had any such statue existed of her time, it was more likely to be found amongst the rubbish of the ruined cloisters, where many are still seen, than in the body of the cathedral.

Close to the group is a picture—at the altar of *Sainte Rote*, who also wears a nun's habit. Probably my favourite has some connexion with her legend.

The once fine cloisters of the Cathedral are in ruins. A few door-ways remain, which seem of an earlier date than the church itself; and some very antique tombs, with effigies, are thrown into corners totally uncared for. If these were restored to some of the empty niches they would be more in place.

At one end of the Cathedral, under the organ-loft, are some very curious bas-reliefs, in which there seems a singular jumble of sacred and profane history. They are very well executed, and worthy of minute attention. An arcade of the time of the Renaissance, extremely beautiful, but incongruous, encloses these carvings.

But, perhaps, the most remarkable of all the churches of Bordeaux is St. Seurin: its portico is one of the richest and most elaborate I ever saw, and the beauty and delicacy of its adornments

are beyond description. The church itself, except this precious *morceau*, is not so interesting as others ; although here once reposed the body of the famous paladin, Rolando, whose body was brought, by Charlemagne, from Blaye. There, on his tomb, rested his wondrous sword, Durandal, which was afterwards transported to Roquemador en Quercy. This was the weapon with which he, at one stroke, clove the rock of the Pyrenees which bears his name.* His tomb and his bones must be sought elsewhere now, with those of many other of the knights who fell at Roncesvalles' fight. Where his famous horn was deposited after it came from Blaye does not appear.



Another long ramble, which exhibited to us more of the curiosities of Bordeaux, brought us to the Roman building which still rises, in ruins, in one of the distant quarters of the town, and

* See description of *the Breche*, in the second volume of this work.

is called the Palais Gallien. This fabric has a singular appearance, its strong arch, which still serves as a passage from one street to another, its thick walls of brick and small stone, its loops, through which the blue sky shines, and its ivy-covered masses make it very imposing. The learned are divided as to its date : Ausonius does not name it in his enumeration of the works of Bordeaux ; but its Roman origin, of whatever age, is undoubted. It stands in a state of squalid neglect and dirt, sharing the fate of most of the antiquities of Bordeaux. If the space were cleared, and the surrounding huts removed, a decent walk made, and the whole enclosed, this monument of former days might form an attractive object : as it is, the struggle to escape entanglement in every sort of dirt, while fighting one's way to the ruined amphitheatre, is almost too disheartening. When these circumstances accompany a visit to antiquities in out-of-the-way places, such as Saintes, and distant and anti-commercial towns, such as Poitiers, one has no reproach to make to the inhabitants ; but what is to be said for rich and flourishing Bordeaux,—the rival of Paris,—when she allows her monuments to remain in so degraded a state !

One of the glories of Bordeaux is having been the birth-place of Montaigne, whose tomb is in the church of the Feuillants, now the college. There are two inscriptions,—one Greek and one

Latin ; both of which appear unsuitable and extravagant.

Another great man, born near Bordeaux, was Montesquieu : to see whose château of La Brède, about four leagues off, is one of the usual excursions of tourists ; but we were prevented visiting it by bad weather.

Whatever may be the effect of Bordeaux, as a city, one charm it has which can hardly be disputed, namely, the remarkable beauty of its young women of the *grisette* class, and the pe-



culiar grace with which they wear the handkerchief, which it is usual to wreath round the head in a manner to display its shape to the greatest advantage, and which is tied with infinite taste ; showing the form of the large knot of hair behind, which falls low upon the neck, in the most classical style. They

have generally good complexions, rich colour, fine dark eyes and very long eye-lashes, glossy dark hair, and graceful figures. As they flit and glide about the streets,—and you come upon them at every turn,—in their dark dresses and shawls, with only a lively colour in the stripe of their pretty head-dress, a stranger cannot fail to be exceedingly struck with their countenances and air. Black and yellow predominate in the hues; but sometimes a rich chocolate colour, with some other tint rather lighter, relieves the darkness of the rest of the costume. A gold chain is worn round the throat, with a golden cross attached; and a handsome broach generally fastens the well-made gown, with its neatly-plaited collar, rather more open in front than is usual in France. They are said to be great coquettes; and certainly worthy of the admiration which they are sure to attract.

When one observes how flat and marshy all the ground about Bordeaux is, even now, one need not be surprised at the illness it must have engendered in the time of the Black Prince, nor that his health suffered so fatally from its influence. He appears to have deferred his departure from this uncongenial climate as long as possible, until the loss of his eldest son, Prince Edward, at the interesting age of six years, decided him to trust it no longer.

The poor child died the beginning of January 1371, to the extreme grief of his parents; “as,” says the chronicle, “might well be.” It was then recommended to the Prince of Wales and Aquitaine that he should return to England, in order that, in his native country and air, he might recover his health, which was fast failing. This counsel was given him by the surgeons and physicians who understood his malady. The prince was willing to follow their advice, and said that he should be glad to return. Accordingly he arranged all his affairs, and prepared to leave.

“When,” says the chronicler, “the said prince had settled his departure, and his vessel was all ready in the Garonne, at the harbour of Bordeaux, and he was in that city with madame his wife, and young Richard their son, he sent a special summons to all the barons and knights of Gascony, Poitou, and all of whom he was sire and lord. When they were all come and assembled in a chamber in his presence, he set forth to them how he had been their father, and had maintained them in peace as long as he could, and in great prosperity and power, against their neighbours, and that he left them only and returned to England in the hope of recovering his health, of which he had great want. He therefore entreated them, of their love, that they would serve and obey the Duke of Lancaster his brother, as they had obeyed him in time past: for they

would find him a good knight, and courteous, and willing to grant all, and that in their necessities he would afford them aid and counsel. The barons of Aquitaine, Gascony, Poitou, and Saintonge, agreed to this proposition; and swore, by their faith, that he should never find them fail in fealty and homage to the said duke; but that they would show him all love, service, and obedience; and they swore the same to him, being there present, and each of them *kissed him on the mouth*.

“These ordinances settled, the prince made no long sojourn in the city of Bordeaux, but embarked on board his vessel, with madame, the princess, and their son, and the Earl of Cambridge, and the Earl of Pembroke: and in his fleet were five hundred men-at-arms, besides archers. They sailed so well that, without peril or harm, they reached Hampton. There they disembarked, and remained to refresh for three days; and then mounted on horseback—the prince in his litter—and travelled till they came to Windsor, where the king then was; who received his children *very sweetly*, and informed himself, by them, of the state of Guienne. And when the prince had remained a space with the king, he took leave and went to his hotel at Berkhamstead, about *twenty leagues* from the city of London.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GARONNE — THE LORD OF LANGOYRAN — MIRACLE OF THE MULE—CASTLE OF THE FOUR SONS OF AYMONT—THE AGED LOVER—GAVACHES—THE FRANCHIMANS—COUNT RAYMOND—FLYING BRIDGES — THE MILLER OF BARBASTE — THE TROUBADOUR COUNT—THE COUNT DE LA MARCHE—THE ROCHEL-LAISE—EUGÉNIE AND HER SONG.

AT four o'clock, on a September morning, we followed our *commissionnaire* from the Hôtel de Nantes, at Bordeaux, along the now solitary quay, for nearly a mile, the stars shining brightly and the air soft and balmy, to the steam-boat, which was to take us along the Garonne to Agen—a distance of about a hundred and twelve miles. The boat was the longest and narrowest I ever saw, but well enough appointed, with very tolerable accommodation, and an excellent *cuisine*.

As soon as it was daylight, we began to look out for the beauties of the river, which several persons had told us was, in many respects, superior to the Loire ; consequently, as we continued to pass long, marshy fields, without an elevation, covered with

the blue crocus, and bordered with dim grey salallows, we were content, expecting, when we were further from the neighbourhood of Bordeaux, that these beauties would burst upon our view. For many hours the boat pursued its way against the stream, but nothing striking came before our view : the same clay-coloured river, the same flat bank, with here and there a little change to undulating hills of insignificant height, and occasionally some village, picturesquely situated, or some town, with a few ruined walls, which told of former battles and sieges. All these banks were the scenes of contention between the Lusignans and the Epermonists, in 1649 ; and here are many famous vineyards ; amongst them Castres and Portets, renowned for their white wines ; close to which is La Brède, where Montesquieu was born.

The scenery about this part began to improve ; some ruins, crowning a height, appeared, which we found had once been the Château de Langoyran ; about a lord of which an anecdote is told, characteristic of the period when it occurred. François de Langoyran carried on constant contention with two neighbouring chiefs, who were friends to England ; and, one day, with forty lances, he presented himself before the walls of Cadillac, occupied by an English garrison : “ Where is Courant, your captain ? ” said he ; “ let him know that the Sire de Langoyran desires a joust with him : he is so good and so valiant, he

will not refuse, for the love of his lady ; and if he should, it would be to his great dishonour ; and I shall say, wherever I come, that he refused a joust of lances from cowardice." Bernard Courant accepted the challenge, and a deadly strife began, in which Langoyran was wounded and thrown to the earth. Seeing that his troop were coming to his rescue, Courant summoned his adversary to yield ; but, he refusing to do so, Courant drew his dagger, stabbed him to the heart, and rode out of the lists, leaving the imprudent knight dead on the spot. A later lord of Langoyran became a firm ally of the English, till they were expelled under Charles le Bien Servi.

Cadillac, where once stood a magnificent castle, built by the Duke d'Epemon, where Louis XIII. and all his court were entertained with great pomp, in 1620, and which cost above two millions of francs, offers now but a retreat for convicts.

Barsac is not far off, well known for its fine white wines ; and beyond, is Sainte Croix de Mont, a village placed on rather a bold eminence. At Preignac the little river Ciron runs into the Garonne, and brings on its current wood from the Landes. Sometimes this small stream becomes so swollen, that it overflows, and renders the road in its neighbourhood dangerous. After the battle of Orthez, the mutilated remains of the French army crossed the valley, which this river had rendered a perfect

marsh, at the peril of their lives, in order to pursue their melancholy journey, flying from the British arms.

Close by is Garonnelle, a port of the *Verdelais*, where, situated a little way up the country, is a famous chapel, dedicated to Notre Dame du Luc, to which pilgrims resort, on the 8th of September, from all parts of France—so great is her renown. The chapel was founded in the twelfth century, by a Countess of Foix, and re-edified by another, or, as some say, built first in 1407, under the following circumstances :—

One day, as Isabella de Foix, wife of Archambaud de Grailli, Count of Bénéauge, was visiting her domains, she had occasion to pass through a wood, when suddenly the mule on which she was riding, stopped, and would not stir from the spot either one way or the other. It was found that his foot had sunk into a *very hard* stone, to the depth of four or five inches, his iron-shod hoof imprinting a mark on the substance. The lady, much *surprised* at such a circumstance, which could be no other than a prodigy, descended from the animal, had the stone raised, and beheld, as well as all those who accompanied her, and as all may see who visit the holy chapel raised in the wood, a perfect portrait of the blessed Virgin, where the hoof of the mule had been !

This sanctuary was given in charge to the monks

of the order of Grand Mont. The Huguenots pillaged and burnt the chapel, in 1562. It was again constructed, and given to the Father Celestins, in the seventeenth century; but in all its perils and dangers the miraculous stone has remained uninjured, and attracts the same veneration as ever. Perhaps it is its vicinity which has imparted such virtues to a vineyard near, which produces the far-famed "Sauterne" known throughout Europe.

We came to a great many suspension-bridges on our way: the French seem to have a perfect passion for throwing them across their rivers in this region; and, it is said, not all of them are safe; as, for instance, the admired and vaunted Cubzac, which, it is now generally feared, will give way. One of these bridges is at Langon; once a very important town, and one of late much improved in commerce, in consequence of the traffic caused by the steam-boats from Bordeaux to Agen.

A famous siege was sustained here, against the Huguenots, in 1587, when the Lord of Langon defended himself in a gallant manner, though abandoned by all his people, *his wife alone* sharing his danger, and fighting by his side to the last, and even after his castle was taken, resisting still. The grand route from Bordeaux to Bayonne passes by Langon. There is no vestige of its castle; but a fine church, built by the English, exists, where the arms of England are even now conspicuous. Scattered

about, here and there, but distant from the river, ruins of castles are still to be seen : amongst others, that of Budos is very picturesque.

At St. Macaire, where furious contentions once took place, during the wars of religion ;—two hundred English prisoners were taken at the time of the battle of Toulouse. The church has an imposing effect.

Soon after this, the banks of the river become rocky, and are full of caverns, inhabited in a similar manner to those which so much struck me on the Loire ; but they by no means present so singular or picturesque an appearance. The remains of the ancient stronghold of Castets look well placed on a height in this neighbourhood ; but the scattered ruins which cover a hill near, are more interesting than any, although there are now but little traces of a fortress once the theme of minstrels and romancers. This is no other than the castle of the Four Sons of Aymon.

The little port of Gironde is remarkable for a dreadful event which happened there in the last century. There was formerly a ferry where the bridge now extends ; and one day the ferryman insisted on being paid double the usual fare. There were no less than eighty-three passengers on board his boat, all of whom resisted the imposition. The "*ferryman-fiend*" was so enraged, that, just as they reached the shore, he ran the boat against a pro-

jecting point, and overturned it. Only three persons, besides himself, escaped: the rest were all lost. The wretch fled instantly, and was never taken; he was condemned to death, and hung in effigy; and since then an annual procession takes place on the banks of the Drot, where the catastrophe occurred, and solemn service is performed for the victims.

The town of La Réole has an imposing effect, rising from the waters. It has shared the fate of all the other towns on the banks, during the ceaseless troubles which for ages made this river roll with blood. When Sully was but fifteen, he was amongst a successful party who took possession of this place; he entered, at the head of fifty men, and gained it in most gallant style; but it was lost the next year, under the following circumstances, which prove that Henry IV. carried his love of jesting considerably beyond the bounds of prudence.

The command of La Réole, says Péréfixe, was given to an old Huguenot captain, named Ussac, who was remarkably ugly, to a degree which made him a mark of observation; nevertheless, his heart was too tender to resist the fascinations of one of the fair syrens who aided the plans of Catherine, the Queen-mother. The Vicomte de Turenne, then aged about twenty, could not resist making the passion of the old soldier a theme of ridicule among

his companions ; and Henry, instead of discouraging this humour, joined in it heartily, making his faithful servant a butt on all occasions. Ussac could not endure this attack on so very tender a point, and, rendered almost frantic with vexation, forgetting every consideration of honour and religion, abandoned the cause of Henry, and delivered over the town of La Réole to the enemy.

In this part of the country are to be found that race of persons known to the original natives as *Gavaches*: the word is one of contempt, taken from the Spanish ; and the habit of treating these people with contumely, which is not even yet entirely worn out, comes from an early time : that is to say, so long ago as 1526 ; at which period a great part of the population on the banks of the Drot, and round La Réole and Marmande, was carried off by an epidemic ; so that the country was completely desolate ; and where all was once fertile and flourishing, nothing but ruin and misery was to be seen. Henry d'Albret, King of Navarre, anxious to save it from sterility, and to restore a happy state of things, re-peopled the lands with emigrants, whom he induced to come and settle there, from Anjou, Angoumois, and Saintonge. They united themselves to the very small remnant of those remaining, who had escaped the contagion, and, in a short time, forty-seven *communes* recovered their prosperity.

'The strangers who thus filled the places of the former inhabitants, brought their customs and manners with them; Du Mège remarks that, "to them are owing the style of building which may be observed in some of the old houses in this neighbourhood, namely, the very pointed and inclined roofs, which belong rather to a country accustomed to snow,* than to this where it is not usual."

The descendants of these new colonists have not forgotten their origin; they inherit the manners of their fathers; wear the same thick hair and long coats. Their drawling pronunciation, peculiar idiom, and the slowness of their movements, make them easily distinguished from the lively Gascons. A curious mixture of dialect resulted from the re-union of so many provinces with the *patois* of the country, and the language still heard there is a jargon of strange sounds.

The capital of what was called *La Gavacherie*, was placed at Castelmoron-d'Albret, which is now one of the finest and most fertile cantons in the diocese of Bazas.

There exists a propensity, it seems, in the people of this part of the country, particularly

* *Du Mège (Statistique III.)* This observation scarcely appears to me correct, since the countries bordering on the Loire are certainly not more used to snows than those closer to the mountains. In Bearn these shelving roofs are constantly to be seen.

about Agen, to fix contemptuous epithets on strangers who settle amongst them; it matters not from what land they come,—it is sufficient that the Gascon idiom is unknown to them.

The foreigner is generally called, in derision, *lou Franchiman*;* and is, for a long time after his first arrival, an object of suspicion and dislike.

This term evidently belongs to the period of the English possession, when a *Frenchman* was another word for an enemy.

On these shores, traces of the dwellings of the Romans are constantly found in Mosaic pavements, and ruins and coins. At Hures, in particular, some fine specimens have been lately discovered: amongst others, fragments of pillars of *verd-antique* and fine marbles of different sorts. There is also a marvellous rock at Hures, where an invisible miraculous virgin is still in the habit of performing wonders, though her statue has been long since removed.

A high hill, once crowned with a castle, rises from the river after a series of flat meadows. This was once Meilhan, one of the finest castles in the Garonne, belonging to the Duke de Bouillon, who, suspected of treason, blew up his magnificent abode, destroying with it the abbey and church beneath. An immense forest spread

* See the Poems of Jasmin.

far into the Landes from this point, only a few trees of which remain.

When the castle was destroyed, the clock of the Benedictine church rolled down into the river, and was afterwards raised in the night, and taken possession of by the Marmandais; the Meilhanais even still insist on its being their property.

There are some ruins, in the quarter called La Roque, of a rampart, from whence is a perilous descent to the shore: here once stood a tower, through a breach in which it is said that the Maid of Orleans conducted the soldiers of Charles VII., and took the town. This tower was seen at so great a distance that it gave rise to a proverb: "He who sees Meilhan is not within side it."

Over the principal entrance of the castle was a sculptured stone—still preserved, but in a most ignoble position: it represented a cavalier armed with a lance, with a shield on his left arm; by the form of which it would appear to belong to those used by the ancient Franks. The arms of Meilhan are *three toads*, doubtless the most familiar animal in so damp and marshy a country.

At a village called Couture, a phrase is left from very old times, when a Raymond, Count of Toulouse, happening to stop there to rest, asked for a measure of wine, which he drank off at a draught, though it was no small quantity; instead, therefore, of saying a bottle of two *litres*, it is

usual to say in this country, "*A measure of Count Raymond's.*"

The *Roc de Quatalan* is near this point, whose name has been derived from *quatre-a-l'an*; because it causes so many wrecks in the course of the year.

There is nothing very striking in the appearance of Marmande, once remarkable for its castle and churches and abbeys; but now only a place of commerce connected with Bordeaux. Nevertheless, the Romans, Goths, and Saracens, made it a place of importance, and severally destroyed it in their turn. Richard Cœur de Lion rebuilt and fortified it, only to be again ravaged and pillaged by the party of Montford, and, under the Black Prince, it was taken and retaken. Henry IV. besieged it, and, in 1814, the town of Marmande had to sustain its last attack. It has a good port, and, apparently, some pretty public walks, and is about half-way between Bordeaux and Agen.

Caumont appears next, once not only famous for its castle, but its tyrannical lord; who, in the time of Louis XIII., was governor of this part of the river, and carried on a system of oppression which became unbearable. He cast an iron chain across the river, to prevent the passing of vessels, on which he laid his hands in the most unpitiful manner, taking possession of all he could meet with. At length, the relation of

his cruelties and rapines found a hearing with the King, who, without consulting any one, had the detested lord of Argilimont, as his stronghold was called, arrested and condemned; his sentence was executed at Bordeaux the day after he was taken, and his castle and estates were bestowed on the Sire d'Estourville.

If half the castles which once bordered this river existed now, the scenery would be wonderfully improved; but they live in memory alone, and their sites are all that remain. Gontaud and Tonneins, where proud towers once frowned, are but insignificant villages now; at the first, a *patois* song is said still to be popular, the chorus of which commemorated the loss of all the people of Gontaud, put to the sword by Biron, in revenge for the death of one of his best officers: it runs thus:—

“ Las damos, que soun sul rempart
Cridon moun Diou ! Biergé Mario !
Adiou, Gountaou, bilo jolio ! ”

Perhaps that which is most worthy of remark on the Garonne, is the number of *flying bridges* which cross it, replacing many an old stone or wooden one, or a ferry, with which the inhabitants of these parts were so long contented. It is to the Messrs. Seguin that France is indebted for these beautiful constructions, the hint of which they are said to have taken in England. I had

seen few of them when I visited his *family of beauties* in the valley near Montbard, whose accomplishments and singular attractions furnished me with a romantic chapter in my last *pilgrimage*.*

A stone bridge, built by Napoleon, however, crosses the river at Aiguillon, which stands at the confluence of the Lot and Garonne, and is famous for its castle, built by the Duke d'Aiguillon—that minister who, protected by M^{de}. du Barry, gave his aid towards preparing the downfall of France, undermined by the acts of a series of worthless characters, in every department of the state, from the monarch downwards. Marie Antoinette held him in especial odium, and he was exiled, by her desire, to his gorgeous château on the Lot, where he was, in fact, a prisoner, not being allowed to sleep out of it; on one occasion, when he visited Agen for two days, word was sent to him that it was expected he should not prolong his stay. The castle, in his time, was a Versailles in miniature, and was not entirely finished at the Revolution.

An ancient Roman tower, of which a few walls only now remain, on the route to Agen, was once a conspicuous object from the river: it was called *La Tourrasse*, (“*enormous tower*” in *patois*), and many discoveries prove the importance of this place in the time of the Romans.

* “See Pilgrimage to Auvergne,” chap. xiii. p. 271.

The Baïse is the next river that falls into the Garonne, following whose banks towards Nerac is Barbaste and its old château, of which Henri Quatre was fond of calling himself *The Miller*, which title, on one occasion, stood him in good stead when a great danger threatened him; a soldier of the opposite party, who came from this part of the country where the prince was always beloved, could not resolve to see the destruction which awaited him if he had advanced a step towards a mine which was just on the point of blowing up. At the critical instant, he called out, in *patois*, which none but Henry understood, “Moulié dé Barbaste, pren garde à la gatte qué bay gatoua:”—‘Miller of Barbaste, beware of the cat’ (*gatte* means, indifferently, *cat* or *mine*) ‘which is going to kitten’ (*gatoua* has the meaning of *blowing up*, as well.) Henry drew back in time, just as the mine exploded. Thanks, therefore, to his readiness, and the expressive nature of the Gascon *patois*, the hero was, for that time, saved; he took care not to lose sight of his deliverer, and, on a future occasion, rewarded him amply for the service he had rendered.

The little port of St. Marie, well known as a safe harbour to the fishermen of the Garonne, once formed part, with the town, of the possessions of Raymond, the last Count of Toulouse; who, after a series of persecutions from the Pope and the King

of France, (St. Louis,) to induce him to give up the protection of the Albigenses, was permitted to retain this portion, only on condition of destroying the fortifications of the strong castle which existed there. Guy, Viscount de Cavaillon, his friend and fellow troubadour, on one occasion addressed to him the following lines, to which he returned the answer subjoined; but, nevertheless, was obliged to submit to the power of the Church, like the rest of the world:

“GUY DE CAVAILLON TO THE COUNT OF TOULOUSE.

“Tell me, Count, if you would rather
Owe your lands and castles high
To the Pope, our holy father,
Or to sacred chivalry?
Were it best a knight and noble
Conquer'd by his sword alone,
Bearing heat, and cold, and trouble,
By his arm to gain his own?”

“ANSWER OF COUNT RAYMOND TO GUY DE CAVAILLON.

“Guy, much sooner would I gain
All by valour and my sword,
Than by other means obtain
What no honour can afford.
Church nor clergy I despise,
Neither fear them, as you know;
But no towers or castles prize
Which their hands alone bestow:
Holding honour above all
Gifts or conquests, great or small.”

The evening was drawing in too much by the time we reached that part of the shore, where the few walls of the once stupendous château of the Lusignans appear, and we could see nothing but the shadow—it might be of the wings of the fairy, Melusine, hovering in the dim light over this, one of her numerous castles.

Here lived and contended Hugues de Lusignan, Counte de la Marche, who had married his first love, the beautiful Isabeau d'Angoulême, widow of King John of England; whose effigy so delighted me at Fontevraud, lying beside that of her brother-in-law, Cœur de Lion.* But, if that lovely face and delicate form truly represented the princess, her character is singularly at variance with her gentle demeanour. She was the most imperious, restlessly proud, and vindictive woman of her time, and kept up a constant warfare with her husband and the King of France; to whom she could not endure that the Count de Lusignan should be considered a vassal. “I,” she cried, “the widow of a king! the mother of a king and an empress! am, then, to be reduced to take rank after a simple countess! to do homage to a count!” This was on the occasion of the marriage of the brother of Louis IX., with Jeanne, Countess and heiress of Toulouse, to whom the Count of Lusignan owed

* See “A Summer amongst the Bocages and the Vines,” vol. ii. chap. i. page 15.

homage. "No," she continued, with indignant fury, "you shall not commit so cowardly an action: resist: my son, and my son-in-law, will come to your aid. I will raise the people of Poitou—my allies, my vassals—and, if they are not enough, I have power alone to save you from such disgrace." Hugues, thus excited, agreed to follow her counsel; and a long struggle ensued, sometimes attended with triumph to the haughty countess, sometimes with discomfiture; and ending by the ruin of her husband and children, and the confiscation of much of their domains to the crown of France. This was she to whom the troubadour count addressed these lines, amongst others:

"So full of pleasure is my pain,
To me my sorrow is so dear,
That, not the universe to gain
Would I exchange a single tear.

"What have I said?—I cannot choose,
Nor would I seek to have the will;
How can I when my soul I lose
In thought and sleepless visions still,
Yet cannot from her presence fly,
Altho' to linger is to die."

We were seated in the cabin of the steam-boat, resigning ourselves to patience until Agen should be reached—for it was now dark, and a shower had fallen which made the decks wet—when we were summoned to brave all by the promise of a treat

above. We had observed, in the course of the day, a party of young women, each wrapped in a large black cloak, the pointed hood of which was either drawn over the head or allowed to fall behind, showing the singular square cap, which at once told they were Rochellaises. They were at the opposite end of the long vessel; and, as some were below, we had no idea that they mustered so large a party, for it appeared that there were no fewer than twenty-one, all from La Tremblade, or the other islands in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle. They were taking their usual autumn voyage up the Garonne, and, from Agen, were destined to various towns as far as the Pyrenees, where they remain all the oyster season, receiving, by the boat, twice a week, a consignment of oysters to be disposed of, on the spot where their residence is fixed. They were generally young, some extremely so, and very well conducted; sitting together in groups, and talking in an under tone; but, at this hour of the evening, they all congregated on deck, and were singing some of their songs as the boat went rapidly on, and the soft breeze caught up their notes.

When I first joined them, it was so dark that I could distinguish their figures with difficulty, and only knew, by the murmurs of applause which followed the close of their chaunt, that they were surrounded by all the crew, who were attentively

listening to their strains. When they found some strangers had come amongst them they were seized with a fit of shyness, which I feared would put a stop to the scene altogether; for the chief songstress declared herself hoarse, and uttered "her pretty oath, by yea and nay, she could not, would not, durst not" sing again: however, at last the spirit came again, and, after a little persuasion, she agreed to recollect something. "Ah, Ma'amselle Eugénie," said one of the older girls, "if I had such a voice I would not allow myself to be so entreated." Accordingly she began, and the chorus of her song was taken up by all the young voices. I never heard anything more melodious and touching than the song altogether: Eugénie's voice was soft, clear, and full, and had a melancholy thrill in it, which it was impossible to hear without being affected; she seemed to delight in drawing out her last notes, and hearing their sound prolonged on the air. The ballads she chose were *all sad*, in the usual style of the Bretons: one was expressive of sorrow for absence, and was full of tender reproaches, ending in assurances of truth, in spite of fate; and one, "Dis moi! dis moi!" was a lament for a captive, which, as well as I could catch the words, —partly French and partly *patois*—was full of mournful regret, and seemed to run thus at every close:

"The north wind whistles—the night is dark; at

the foot of the hill the captive looks forth in vain,—ah! he is weeping still! always at the foot of that hill you may hear his sighs.

“ ‘Alas!’ he says, ‘what is there in the world that can compare to liberty? and I am a prisoner. I weep alone!’—he sees a bird fly by, and exclaims, ‘There is something still left worth living for—I may be one day free!’ ”

“ Hélas ! le pauvre enfant—il pleure toujours :
Il pleure toujours ! au fond de la colline.”

Perhaps this song might allude to some of those unfortunate patriots of La Vendée, whose fate was as sad as any romance could tell.

I never remember to have heard what seemed to me more real melody than this singing; and was very sorry when the young girls insisted, in return for their compliance, on one of the crew obliging them with a song; for he obeyed, and, in one of the usual cracked voices, which are so common in France, raised peals of laughter by intoning an *English air*—no other than “God Save the King.” This effectually spoilt the pretty romance of the veiled Rochellaises; not one of whom we could see, in the darkness, and their voices seemed to come from the depths of the Garonne, as if they were the spirits of its waters, who had taken possession of our vessel, and were beguiling us with their sweet voices into their whirlpools and amongst their sands.

I thanked them for my share of the amusement, and remarked to one near me how beautiful the voice of Eugénie was. "Yes," said she, "she is celebrated in the country for singing so well; but, even now, her mother sings the best; you never heard such a lovely tone as her's; they are a musical family: every one cannot have such a gift as Eugénie."

This seemed a good beginning for the music and poetry of the south, and promised well for all that was to come; *but that music was the last*, as it had been the first, I had heard in France; where, in general, there is no melody amongst the people, in any part that I have visited. As for its poetry, we were approaching a place where a celebrated *patois* poet resided, who is the boast, not only of Agen, but of Gascony, and who has made, of late, a great sensation in this part of France.

CHAPTER XVII.

AGEN—LA BELLE ESTHER—ST. CAPRAIS—THE LITTLE CHERUBS —
ZOÉ AT THE FOUNTAIN—THE HILL—LE GRAVIER—JASMIN,
THE POET-BARBER—THE METAPHOR—LAS PAPILLOTAS—FRAN-
ÇONNETTE—JASMIN'S LINES ON THE OLD LANGUAGE—THE
SHEPHERD AND THE GASCON POET—RETURN TO AGEN —
JASMIN AND THE KING OF FRANCE—JASMIN AND THE QUEEN
OF ENGLAND.

It was night when we reached Agen, and, amidst a tumult of *patois*, which sounded like Spanish, and was strange to our unaccustomed ears, we landed, and had our goods torn from us by peremptory porters, who, in spite of remonstrance, piled every one's baggage together in carts, and, ordering all the passengers to follow as they might, set off with it to some unknown region. The stars were bright, and the night fine, as we scrambled along over a very rugged road for more than a mile—for, the new pier not being yet finished, the boat was obliged to land its cargo at a distance from the town. Up and down, in and out, we pursued our way, guided by the lanthorns of our tyrants, and at last found ourselves in a boulevard, planted with

large high trees, which we followed till a shout announced to us that the Hôtel de France was reached.

By what seemed little less than a miracle, all our baggage was safely brought after us, our troubles were quickly over, and we took possession of spacious and lofty chambers, in a very imposing-looking hotel.

The next morning the weather was magnificent, and Agen came out in great splendour, with its fine promenades, handsome bridge, its beautiful hills and river, and its fine clear fresh air, so different from the dull atmosphere of Bordeaux. The first figure we saw on going out, was one of the Rochellaises seated at the inn door, installed with her oyster-baskets, and receiving the congratulations of all her friends of the hotel, who hastened to welcome her annual return to Agen. It seems, she takes up her abode at the hotel during her stay, and her arrival is considered quite an event, as we found at breakfast, where numerous Frenchmen were conversing with great animation on the subject. *La Belle Esther* seemed to be a general favourite, as well as her merchandise, and she was so remarkably pretty, modest and graceful, that I was not surprised at the fact. Every one of her admirers gave her an order as he arrived, and her pretty little hands were busily engaged in opening oysters for some time, which having done, she

brought them in herself, on a dish, to each guest. I was sorry to see that she had abandoned her costume, and was dressed merely like any other *grisette*; but this is very much the case everywhere. She told me, on great fête days, however, she occasionally appeared in it; but she seemed to think it more convenient to wear the little flat frilled cap of the town, rather than the square winged machine of her province. I had heard before that she was so well behaved, and so graceful in her manners, that she was occasionally invited to the public balls of Agen; but she only answered by a deep blush, when I asked if it was so; and said, she *seldom went to soirées*. She is about three or four-and-twenty; and if the rest of her party who sang to us in the boat were as pretty, they must have been as dangerous as Queen Catherine's band of beauties, when their black hoods were thrown back. She was, however, not one of the singers herself; but I recognised, in her voice, the reproofing sister who urged Eugénie to sing, and told me of her mother's talent. I afterwards met with more of my acquaintances in the dark, who were scattered through the towns of Gascony.

The town of Agen is very agreeably situated on the right bank of the Garonne: the river is here, though by no means clear, less muddy than at Bordeaux; and its windings add much to the beauty of the landscape. Between the suspension-bridge and the town is a magnificent promenade,

formed of several rows of fine trees—one of the most majestic groves I ever saw : it is called Le Gravier. There are two others, each extremely fine : one of which is planted with acacias. The town has nothing to recommend it, being dull, and ill-paved, with scarcely a building worthy of notice; the strange old clock-tower of the Mairie, looks as if it had once formed part of a ponderous building; but it has no beauty of architecture. Some of the oldest streets and the market-place are built with arcades, in the same fashion as La Rochelle, and they are very dark and dilapidated.

The cathedral, dedicated to St. Caprais, is, however, a monument of which the Agenois have reason to be proud: it has been cruelly ill-used, and its exterior is greatly damaged; but it is undergoing repair, and the restorations both within and without are the most judicious I had observed anywhere. The beautiful, ornamented, circular arches are re-appearing in all their purity; and the fine sculptured façade is shining out from the ruin which has long encompassed it; a wide space is opened all round the building; and, when the restorations are completed, the effect will be very grand.

In the interior are some most beautiful specimens of early architecture; galleries above galleries, of different periods, all exquisite, and one row of a pattern such as I had never before met with, almost approaching the Saracenic. The grace and lightness of the whole is quite unique, and we sat for an

hour enjoying the cool retreat of the aisle, endeavouring to follow the elaborate tracery of the arches, and admiring the effect of the sun-light streaming in at the open door, which gave entrance to a procession of priests, and children of very tender age, who were about to undergo the ordeal of examination. As we sat, by degrees, first one little stray black-eyed creature, in a tight skull-cap and full petticoat, then another, came and placed themselves before us, immovable and curious, like so many tame gazelles; we pretended to be angry, and drove them away; but, while we went on with our sketches of some of the arches, the little things came back again with the same imperturbable look of silent amazement and curiosity as before. There were four or five, all very round and rosy-cheeked and pretty, and, though their vicinity rather interrupted us, we were sorry when the zealous beadle appeared, at the distant glimpse of whose portly form the troop rattled off, making their wooden shoes ring along the pavement, and disappeared in the sun-gleam of the old Roman doorway, like so many cherubs in the costume of the Middle Ages.

The morning was magnificent when we mounted the high hill which overlooks the town, and which is called *Le Mont Pompéian*, or *De l'Ermitage*; the banks were covered with box and purple heath and wild thyme, the air full of freshness and fragrance, and all was "balmy summer." The ascent to the top is extremely steep, and must be very toilsome

to the peasants, some of whom were climbing up, bending under different loads. A party, however, who kept pace with us, told us they were merely out taking a walk, as it was such a fine day, to do the children good; and they seemed to enjoy the prospect and the warm sun as much as we did, and be quite in the same humour for idling their time away. On the top of the hill is a telegraph, from whence there is a beautiful view; and the vine-field, full of ripe purple grapes, looked very inviting; jasmine grew wild in the hedges, and perfumed the air; and, altogether, the hills of Agen gave a promise of southern beauty, which, alas! I found, on advancing nearer to Spain, was by no means realized. We remained for some hours, choosing different retreats from whence to enjoy the views, which are varied and beautiful in the extreme. After passing fields of high Indian corn, gay with its *tasselled* blossoms, we came to a splendid opening, where we beheld the broad Garonne, winding through a landscape of great richness and variety, glittering in the sun, and spreading wide its majestic arms over the country. Through a long lane of purple grapes and crimson leaves, we pursued our way, until we came to a ruined fountain, of very picturesque appearance, extremely deep, and the water sparkling at the bottom like a diamond in the dark; the mouth covered with shrubs and flowers of every hue, and straggling vines, with their now purple and crimson leaves, making a bower around it. Two women

and a boy were resting near, and we entered into conversation with them ; there was something interesting in the worn features of the younger female ; who told us she was from Le Mans, *a great way off, in a charming country*, which she said, with a sigh, that she had not seen since she was a girl, before she made the imprudent match which had reduced her to work hard in the fields of Agen to support a large family ; for her husband had deserted her, and she had no one to look to. “ I dare say,” she said, “ Le Mans is much altered now, since I saw it ; there is no chance of my ever going home again now :” these words were uttered in so sad a tone that we were quite affected. She had been very pretty, and was even now agreeable-looking, though, so very pensive ; her name, she told us, was Zoë, and she seemed glad to hear news of her native town, though the recollection revived, evidently, very painful thoughts. As we sat drawing, these poor people remained wandering about, picking up sticks and resting in the shade ; the ground was damp, and the old woman—who had asked her companion, in *patois*, the subject of her talk with us, as she did not understand French—looked very benevolently towards us, and presently took off her apron, and came insisting that we should use it as a seat, as she said it was dangerous for such as us to sit on the bare ground ; “ we are used to it, and it does us no harm ; but you are wrong to risk it,” was her remark ; and, with all the kindness imaginable, she

made us accept her courtesy. We have often met with similar demonstrations of kind feeling from the peasantry in France; who, when not spoilt by the town and trade, are generally amiable, and anxious to oblige on all occasions.

Nothing could be more lovely than the extensive view before us from this spot; hills covered with vines and rich foliage, fields of Indian corn, bright meadows and banks of glowing flowers, with the river winding through all, wide and bright; the town, picturesque in the distance, undulating hills, and a clear blue sky. At the end of a large field, we came to a pretty bower, formed of vines, on the edge of the wooded declivity; probably used as a retreat by the master and his family, in the time of the vintage; it looked quite Italian, and we were not sorry to shelter there from the hot sun.

Half-way down from the telegraph hill is a cavern called the Hermitage, which once was the retreat of a holy anchorite; but, being now chosen as a place for fêtes, has become a sort of cockney spot, and has lost its character of solemnity; but it is the great object of attraction to the inhabitants of Agen, who flock there in crowds on saints'-days and Sundays.

We had made an appointment, on our return from wandering amongst the heights, to pay a visit to a very remarkable personage, who is held, both in Agen and throughout Gascony, to be the greatest poet of modern times. We had heard much of him before we arrived, and a friend of mine had given

me some lines of his with the music, in England; one song I published in a recent work;* but I was not then aware of the history of the author, of whom the ballad “Mi cal mouri!” was one of the earliest compositions, and that which first tended to make him popular. My friend, who possesses very delicate taste and discrimination, was much struck with the grace and beauty of this song; though the reputation of its author has reached its height since the time when she first met with his melody.

At the entrance of the promenade, Du Gravier, is a row of small houses—some *cafés*, others shops, the indication of which is a painted cloth placed across the way, with the owner’s name in bright gold letters, in the manner of the arcades in the streets, and their announcements. One of the most glaring of these was, we observed, a bright blue flag, bordered with gold; on which, in large gold letters, appeared the name of “Jasmin, Coiffeur.” We entered, and were welcomed by a smiling dark-eyed woman, who informed us that her husband was busy at that moment *dressing a customer’s hair*, but he was desirous to receive us, and begged we would walk into his parlour at the back of the shop. There was something that struck us as studied in this, and we began to think the reputation of the poet might be alto-

* “Pilgrimage to Auvergne,” chap. xiii, p. 210.

gether a *got-up* thing. I was obliged to repeat to myself the pretty song of "Mi cal mouri," to prevent incredulous doubts from intruding; but as I recollected the sweet voice that gave the words effect, I feared that it was that charm which had misled me.

His wife, meantime, took the advantage of his absence, which had, of course, been arranged *artistically*, to tell us of Jasmin's triumphs. She exhibited to us a *laurel crown of gold* of delicate workmanship, sent from the city of Clemence Isaure, Toulouse, to the poet; who will probably one day take his place in the *capitoul*. Next came a golden cup, with an inscription in his honour, given by the citizens of Auch; a gold watch, chain, and seals, sent by the King, Louis-Philippe; an emerald ring worn and presented by the lamented Duke of Orleans; a pearl pin, by the graceful duchess, who, on the poet's visit to Paris accompanied by his son, received him in the words he puts into the mouth of Henri Quatre.*—

" Brabes Gascous !

A moun amou per bous aou dibes creyre :

Benès ! benès ! ey plazé de bous beyre :

Aproucha bous ! "

A fine service of linen, the offering of the town of Pau, after its citizens had given fêtes in his honour, and loaded him with caresses and praises; and

* On his statue at Nerac.

nick-nacks and jewels of all descriptions offered to him by lady-ambassadors, and great lords; English "*misses*" and "*miladis*;" and French, and foreigners of all nations who did or did not understand Gascon.

All this, though startling, was not convincing; Jasmin, the barber, might only be a fashion; a *furor*, a *caprice*, after all; and it was evident that he knew how to get up a scene well. When we had become nearly tired of looking over these tributes to his genius, the door opened, and the poet himself appeared. His manner was free and unembarrassed, well-bred, and lively; he received our compliments naturally, and like one accustomed to homage; said he was ill, and unfortunately too hoarse to read anything to us, or should have been delighted to do so. He spoke in a broad Gascon accent, and very rapidly and eloquently; ran over the story of his successes; told us that his grandfather had been a beggar, and all his family very poor; that he was now as rich as he wished to be, his son placed in a good position at Nantes; then showed us his son's picture, and spoke of his disposition, to which his brisk little wife added, that, though no fool, he had not his father's genius, to which truth Jasmin assented as a matter of course. I told him of having seen mention made of him in an English review; which he said had been sent him by Lord Durham, who had paid him a visit;

and I then spoke of 'Mi cal mouri' as known to me. This was enough to make him forget his hoarseness and every other evil : it would never do for me to imagine that that little song was his best composition ; it was merely his first ; he must try to read me a little of l'Abuglo—a few verses of "Françouneto ;"—"You will be charmed," said he ; "but if I were well, and you would give me the pleasure of your company for some time ; if you were not merely running through Agen, I would kill you with weeping—I would make you die with distress for my poor Margarido—my pretty Françouneto !"

He caught up two copies of his book, from a pile lying on the table, and making us sit close to him, he pointed out the French translation on one side, which he told us to follow while he read in Gascon. He began in a rich soft voice, and as he advanced, the surprise of Hamlet on hearing the player-king recite the disasters of Hecuba, was but a type of ours, to find ourselves carried away by the spell of his enthusiasm. His eyes swam in tears ; he became pale and red ; he trembled ; he recovered himself ; his face was now joyous, now exulting, gay, jocose ; in fact, he was twenty actors in one ; he rang the changes from Rachel to Bouffé ; and he finished by delighting us, besides beguiling us of our tears, and overwhelming us with astonishment.

He would have been a treasure on the stage ; for he is still, though his first youth is past, remarkably good-looking and striking ; with black, sparkling eyes of intense expression ; a fine ruddy complexion ; a countenance of wondrous mobility ; a good figure ; and action full of fire and grace ; he has handsome hands, which he uses with infinite effect ; and, on the whole, he is the best actor of the kind I ever saw. I could now quite understand what a troubadour or *jongleur* might be, and I look upon Jasmin as a revived specimen of that extinct race. Such as he is might have been Gaucelm Faidit, of Avignon, the friend of Cœur de Lion, who lamented the death of the hero in such moving strains ; such might have been Bernard de Ventadour, who sang the praises of Queen Elionore's beauty ; such Geoffrey Rudel, of Blaye, on his own Garonne ; such the wild Vidal : certain it is, that none of these troubadours of old could more move, by their singing or reciting, than Jasmin, in whom all their long-smothered fire and traditional magic seems re-illuminated.

We found we had stayed hours instead of minutes with the poet ; but he would not hear of any apology—only regretted that his voice was so out of tune, in consequence of a violent cold, under which he was really labouring, and hoped to see us again. He told us our countrywomen of Pau had laden him with kindness and attention, and spoke

with such enthusiasm of the beauty of certain "misses," that I feared his little wife would feel somewhat piqued; but, on the contrary, she stood by, smiling and happy, and enjoying the stories of his triumphs. I remarked that he had restored the poetry of the troubadours; asked him if he knew their songs; and said he was worthy to stand at their head. "I am, indeed, a troubadour," said he, with energy; "but I am far beyond them all; they were but beginners; they never composed a poem like my *Françounete*! there are no poets in France now—there cannot be; the language does not admit of it; where is the fire, the spirit, the expression, the tenderness, the force of the Gascon? French is but the ladder to reach to the *first floor* of Gascon—how can you get up to a height except by a ladder!"

This last metaphor reminded me of the Irishman's contempt for an English staircase in comparison to his father's ladder; and my devotion to the troubadours and *early* French poets received a severe shock by the slight thrown on them by the bard of Agen.

We left him, therefore, half angry at his presumption; and once out of his sight I began again to doubt his merit, not feeling ready to accord the meed of applause to conceit at any time; I forgot that Jasmin is a type of his kind in all ways, and "is every inch" a *Gascon*.

His poems, of which I am tempted to give some specimens, must speak for him, although they necessarily lose greatly by transmission into a language so different to the Gascon as English. The last volume he published we brought away with us. It is called *Los Papillotos* de Jasmin, coiffeur*, and contains a great many poems, all remarkable in their way, even including those complimentary verses addressed to certain "*Moussus*," (*Messieurs*.)

The history of this singular person is told by himself in a series of poems called "His recollections," which present a sad and curious picture of his life in its different stages. It appears that Jacques Jasmin, or as he writes it in Gascon, *Jaquou Jansemin*, was born in 1797 or 1798.

"The last century, old and worn out," (says his eulogist, M. Sainte-Beuve,) "had only two or three more years to pass on earth, when, at the corner of an antique street, in a ruined building peopled by a colony of rats, on the Thursday of Carnival week, at the hour when pancakes are being tossed, of a hump-backed father and a lame mother was born a child, a droll little object; and this child was the poet, Jasmin. When a prince is born into the world, the event is celebrated by the report of cannon; but he, the son of a poor tailor, had not even a pop-gun to announce his birth. Nevertheless, he did not appear without *éclat*, for at the moment he made his appearance, a *charivari* was

* The curl-papers.

given to a neighbour, and the music of marrow-bones and cleavers accompanied a song of thirty stanzas, composed for the occasion by his father. This father of his, who could not read, was a poet in his way, and made most of the burlesque couplets for salutations of this description, so frequent in the country. Behold, then, a poetical parentage, as well established as that of the two Marots."

The infant born under so auspicious an aspect, grew and throve in spite of the poverty to which he was heir. He was allowed, when a few years had passed over his head, to accompany his father in those concerts of rough music to which he contributed his poetical powers; but the chief delight of the future troubadour was to go, with his young associates, into the willow islands of the Garonne to gather wood.

"Twenty or thirty together, we used to set out, with naked feet and bareheaded, singing together the favourite song of the south, 'The lamb that you gave me.' Oh! the recollection of this pleasure even now enchants me."

Their faggots collected, these little heroes returned to make bonfires of them; on which occasion many gambols ensued. But, in the midst of the joyous *escapades* which he describes, he had his moments of sadness, which the word "*school*" never failed to increase, for the passion of his soul was to gain instruction, and the poverty of his family precluded all hope. He would listen to his

mother, as she spoke in whispers to his grandfather, of her wish to send him to school; and he wept with disappointment, to find such a consummation impossible. The evidences of this destitution were constantly before him; his perception of the privations of those dear to him became every day keener; and when, after the fair, during which he had filled his little purse by executing trifling commissions, he carried the amount to his mother, his heart sank as she took it from him with a melancholy smile, saying—"Poor child, your assistance comes just in time." Bitter thoughts of poverty would thus occasionally intrude; but the gaiety of youth banished them again, until one sad day the veil was wholly withdrawn, and he could no longer conceal the truth from himself. He had just reached his tenth year, and was one day playing in the square, when he saw a chair, borne along by several persons, in which was seated an old man: he looked up and recognised his grandfather, surrounded by his family. He sprang towards him, and throwing himself into his arms, exclaimed—"Where are they taking you, dear grandfather? why do you weep? why do you leave us who love you so dearly?" "My son," replied the old man, "I am going to the hospital; it is there that all the Jasmins die." A few days after, the venerable man was no more, and from that hour Jasmin never forgot that they were indeed poor.

This melancholy incident closes the first canto of the poet's "Recollections." The second opens with a description of his wretched dwelling, and the scanty support gained by labour *and begging*, shared by nine persons: his grandfather's wallet, from which he had so often received a piece of bread, unknowing how it had been obtained, now hung a sad memorial of his hard life, and told the story of his trials, when he went round to his former friends, from farm to farm, in the hope of filling it for a starving family. At last, one day, the ambitious mother entered out of breath, announcing the joyous tidings that her son was admitted *gratis* into a free school. He became a scholar in a few months, a chorister in a few more, his fine voice doubtless recommending him; he gained a prize, and was in a fair way of advancement, when some childish frolic, punished too severely, caused him to be expelled. On reaching his home, he found all in consternation, for his bad conduct had been visited on his family, and the portion of food sent to them weekly he found was discontinued. His mother tried to console him, and to conceal their real state; but while he saw his little brothers and sisters provided with food, which his mother smilingly dispensed, he discovered to his horror that she no longer wore her ring: it had been sold to buy bread.

The second canto here finishes. The third introduces us to the hero in his capacity of appren-

tice to the same craft of which he still continues a member, and here his comparative prosperity begins. He falls in love, writes verses, sings them, becomes popular, is able to open a little shop on his own account, and burns the old arm-chair in which his ancestors were carried to the hospital. His wife, who was at first an enemy to pen and ink, finding the good effect of his songs, was soon the first to urge him to write; his fellow-citizens became proud of him, his trade increased, and at length he was able to purchase the house on the promenade, where he now lives in comfort; with sufficient for his moderate wishes, always following his trade of hair-cutting, and publishing his poems at the same time. The first of his poems that appeared was called "The Charivari." It is burlesque, and has considerable merit: it is preceded by a very fine ode, full of serious beauty and grace of expression; this was as early as 1825. Several others of great beauty followed, and some of his songs became popular beyond the region where they were first sung. But his finest composition was a ballad, called "The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuillé," which at once crowned him with fame and loaded him with honours.

The last volume he has published is that which I now introduce to the reader: it contains, besides several already known, many new poems, and a ballad, called "Françouneto," which is

acknowledged as a successful rival to "The Blind Girl." The rustic character of his descriptions, and the rustic dialect in which they are conveyed, give a tone of novelty and reality to his works quite peculiar to themselves. The force and powerful effect of the Gascon language is lost in reading the French version, appended to the original; but a very little attention will make that original understood, and the reward well repays the study.

The "Abuglo" (the Blind Girl) thus opens—

"Del pè d'aquelo haouto mountagno
Oùn se pinquo Castel-Cuillé;
Altenque lou pourné, lou pruné, l'amellé,
Blanquejâbon dens la campagno,
Baci lou chan qu'on entendêt,
Un dimècres mati, beillo de Sent-Jouzèt."

"At the foot of the high mountain, where Castle-Cuillé stands in mid-air, at the season when the apple-tree, the plum, and the almond, are whitening all the country round, this is the song that was sung one Wednesday morning, the eve of St. Joseph."

Then comes the chorus, which is no invention of the poet, but a refrain of the country, always sung at rustic weddings, in accordance with a custom of strewing the bridal path with flowers:

"The paths with buds and blossoms strew!
A lovely bride approaches nigh:
For all should bloom and spring anew,
A lovely bride is passing by."

A description then follows of a rural wedding, introducing habits and superstitions, which remind one of Burns and Hallow-e'en. This picture of youth, gaiety, and beauty, is full of truth and nature; and the contrast is affecting, of the desolate situation of the young blind girl, who should have been the bride, but whom Baptiste, her lover, had deserted for one richer, since a severe malady had deprived her of her sight. Poor Marguerite (*Margarido*) still thinks him faithful, and expects his return to fulfil his vow, when the sound of the wedding music, and the explanation of her little brother, reveal to her all her misfortune. The song of hope and fear, as she sits expecting him, is extremely beautiful; and some of the expressions, in the original singular yet musical Gascon, must lose greatly by translation, either in French or English. Her lamentations on her blindness remind one of Milton's heart-rending words on the same subject:—

“ Jour per aoutres, toutjour ! et per jou, malhurouzo,
 Toutjour ney, toutjour ney ! ”

“ MARGARIDO'S REFLECTIONS.

“ After long months of sad regret
 Returned!—return'd? and comes not yet?
 Although to my benighted eyes
 He knows no other star may rise :
 He knows my lonely moments past,
 Expecting, hoping to the last,
 He knows my heart is faithful still,
 I wait my vows but to fulfil.

Alas ! without him what have I ?
Grief bows my fame and dims my eye ;
For others, day and joy and light,
For me, all darkness—always night !

“ What gloom spreads round where he is not :
How cold, how lonely, he away !
But in his presence all forgot,
I never think of sun or day.
What has the day ? a sky of blue—
His eyes are of a softer hue,
That light a heaven of hope and love,
Pure as the skies that glow above.
But skies, earth, blindness, tears, and pain,
Are all forgot, unfelt, unknown,
When he is by my side again,
And holds my hand within his own ! ”

When the unfortunate girl finds that her lover is untrue, despair takes possession of her mind ; she causes herself to be conducted to the church, where the ceremony of the marriage is taking place ; and at the moment when Baptiste pronounces the words which seal his fate with that of her rival, Angela, she rushes forward, and draws a knife to stab herself ; but at the instant she falls dead at his feet, before her hand has accomplished the fatal blow. The poet here congratulates his heroine on having died *without crime*, her *intention* going for nothing, and the angels bearing her soul to heaven as immaculate.

There is little in the plot of this story—its beauty lies in the grace, and ease, and simplicity

of the language, and the pathos of the situations. The same may be said of the ballad of "Françouneto," the latest work of the author, which is just now making a great sensation in France. The close of both these stories is somewhat weak and hurried, and both fail in effect, *except when Jasmin reads them himself*,—then there appears nothing to be desired.

Françonnette is a village beauty and coquette, promised to Marcel, a young soldier, but attached to Pascal, a peasant, whose poverty and pride prevent his declaring the passion he feels for the volatile but tender maiden, who

"Long had fired each youth with love,
Each maiden with despair;"

but, unlike the Emma of the English ballad, Françonnette is too conscious of being fair, and torments her admirers to death. She becomes, at length, the object of suspicion and hatred to her fellows, in consequence of a rumour circulated by her disappointed lover, Marcel, that her Huguenot father had sold her to the evil one, and that misfortune awaited whoever should love or marry her. Some fearful scenes ensue, in which the poet exhibits great power. The quarrel of the rivals is managed with effect; and the rising of the peasantry against the supposed bewitched beauty; the discovery of Pascal's love, and the consequent

revolution the knowledge effects in the mind of the deserted girl ; his tender devotion, her danger, and Marcel's subsequent remorse, are admirably told ; and, on the whole, the story of Françonnette must be acknowledged as a great advance upon the " Aveugle ;" and its superiority promises greater things yet from the poet of Agen.

" FRANÇONNETTE'S MUSINGS.

" On the parched earth when falls the earliest dew,
As shine the sun's first rays, the winter flown,
So love's first spark awakes to life anew,
And fills the startled mind with joy unknown.
The maiden yielded every thought to this—
The trembling certainty of real bliss :
The lightning of a joy before unproved,
Flash'd in her heart, and taught her that she loved.

" She fled from envy, and from curious eyes,
And dream'd, as all have done, those waking dreams,
Bidding in thought bright fairy fabrics rise
To shrine the loved one in their golden gleams.
Alas ! the Sage is right, 'tis the distrest
Who dream the fondest, and who love the best ! "

But, perhaps, a better idea can be conveyed, by giving a version in prose of the whole story.

The Story of Franconnette.

It was at the time when Blaise de Montluc, the sanguinary chief, struck the Protestants with a heavy hand, and his sword hewed them in pieces, while, in the name of a God of mercy, he inundated the earth with tears and blood.

At length he paused from fatigue : it was ended ; no more did the hills resound with the noise of carbine or cannon : the savage leader, to prop the cross, which neither then nor now tottered, had slain, strangled, filled the wells with slaughtered thousands. The earth gave back its dead at Fumel and at Penne : fathers, mothers, children, were nearly exterminated, and the executioners had time to breathe.

The exhausted tiger—the merciless ruffian—dismounted from his charger, re-entered his fortress, with its triple bridge, and its triple moat, and, kneeling at the altar, uttered his devout prayers, received the communion, while his hands were yet reeking with the blood of innocence with which he had glutted his cruelty.

Meantime, in the hamlets, young men and maidens, at first terrified at the bare name of *Huguenot*, devoted their hours to love and amusement as formerly. And in a village, at the foot of a strong castle, one Sunday, a band of lovers were dancing on the votive feast of Roquefort, and, to

the sound of the fife, celebrated St. Jacques and the month of August—that lovely month, which, by the freshness of its dew, and the fire of its sun, ripens our figs and grapes.

There had never been seen a finer fête. Under the large *parasol* of foliage, where the crowd were every year seen in groups—all was full to overflowing. From the heights of the rocks to the depths of the valleys, from Montagnac and Sainte Colombe, new troops of visitors arrived; still they come—still they come—and the sun is high in heaven, like a torch. There is no lack of room where they are met, for the meadows here serve for chambers, and the banks of turf for seats.

What enjoyment!—the heat makes the air sparkle: nothing is more pleasing than to see those fife-players blowing, and the dancers whirling along. Cakes and sweetmeats are taken from baskets; fresh lemonade! how eagerly the thirsty drink it down! Crowds hurry to see Polichinelle—crowds hurry to the merchant whose cymbals announce his treasures—crowds everywhere! But who is she advancing this way? Joy, joy! It is the young Queen of the Meadows. It is she—it is Françonnette. Let me tell you a little concerning her.

In towns as well as in hamlets, you know there is always the pearl of love, precious above all the rest; well, every voice united proclaim her, in the canton, the Beauty of Beauties.

But I would not have you imagine that she is pensive—that she sighs—that she is pale as a lily—that she has languishing, half-closed eyes, blue and soft—that she is slight, and bends with languor, like the willow that inclines beside a clear stream. You would be greatly deceived : Françonnette has eyes brilliant as two sparkling stars ; one might think to gather bunches of roses on her rounded cheeks ; her chestnut hair waves in rich curls ; her mouth is like a cherry ; her teeth would make snow look dim ; her little feet are delicately moulded ; her ankle is light and fine. In effect, Françonnette was the true star of beauty in a female form, grafted here below.

All these charms, too evident to all, caused ceaseless envy amongst the young girls, and many sighs amongst the swains. Poor young enthusiasts, there was not one who would not have died for her : they looked at her—they adored her as the priest adores the cross. The fair one saw it with delight ; and her countenance was radiant with pride and pleasure.

Nevertheless, she has a secret dawn of vexation ; the finest flower is wanting in her circlet of triumph. Pascal—the handsomest of all the youths—he who sings the best—appears to avoid and to see her without love. Françonnette is indignant at his neglect ; she believes that he is hateful to her, when she reflects on his conduct ; she prepares a terrible vengeance, and waits but the

moment when, by a look, she shall make him her slave for ever.

Is it not always so ! From all time a maiden so courted is sure to become vain and proud ; and, young as she is, it is easy to see she is like the rest. Proud she was, to a certain degree, and a coquette she was becoming—a rural one, however, not artful ; she loved none, yet many hoped she did.

Her grandmother would often say to her—“ My child, remember the country is not the town—the meadow is not a ball-room ; you know well that we have promised you to the soldier, Marcel, who loves you, and expects you to be his wife. You must conquer this fickleness of mind. A girl who tries to attract all, ends by gaining none.”

A kiss and a laugh and a caress were the answer ; and, while she bounded away, she would sing, in the words of the song—

“ I have time enough, dear mother,
Time enough to love him yet ;
If I wait and choose no other,
All Love's art I should forget :
And if all is left for one,
’Twere as well be loved by none.”

All this finished by creating much jealousy, suffering, and unhappiness ; nevertheless, these shepherds were not of those that make lays full of grace and tenderness, and who, dying of grief, engrave their names on poplars and willows. Alas ! these shepherds could not write ! besides which,

though Love had turned their heads, they preferred to suffer and live on: but, oh! what confusion in the workshops!—oh, what ill-dressed vines—what branches uncut!—what furrows all irregular!

Now that you know this heedless little beauty, do not lose sight of her;—there she is! see, how she glides along! now she dances with Etienne the *rigaudon d'honneur*: every one follows her with straining eyes and smiles: every one gives her glances of admiration. She loses not one of their regards; and she dances with added grace. Holy cross! holy cross! how she turns and winds, with her lizard-shaped head, and her little Spanish foot, and her wasp-like waist!—when she slides, and whirls, and leaps, and the breeze waves her blue handkerchief, what would they not all give to impress two kisses on her pretty cheek!

One will be so happy! for it is the custom to kiss your partner if you can tire her out; but a young girl is never tired till she chooses to be so; and, already, Guillaume, Louis, Jean, Pierre, Paul—she has wearied them all: there they stand, out of breath, and can boast of having gained no kiss of Françonnette.

Another takes her hand: it is Marcel, her betrothed: a soldier, in favour with the redoubted Montluc; he is tall and powerful; he wears a sabre, a uniform, and has a cockade in his cap; he is as upright as a dart; well made; bold, with a

generous heart, but fiery and proud. Presuming and intrusive—caring little to be invited, but ready to claim whatever he pleases; a boaster, sportive but dangerous, *like a caterpillar*. Marcel doating on Françonnette, flirts with all, endeavours to rouse her jealousy, and has tales to tell of his successes.

Disgusted at his presumption, his betrothed dislikes, at length, to see him; he perceives her repugnance, and, to revenge himself, proclaims that he knows himself beloved; proud of having said it, he increases his boasting; and, the other day, at a meeting, as he broke his glass, he took an oath that no one but himself should have the privilege of kissing Françonnette.

It was curious to behold, as they danced together, how the crowd pressed forward, anxious to see if the handsome soldier would gain the reward which he boasted that none but he should obtain.

At first he smiled, as he led her forward, and his eyes entreated hers; but she remained mute and cold, and her activity appeared but to increase. Marcel, piqued and annoyed, resolved to conquer her; and the vain lover who would rather gain one kiss before all the world than twenty granted in secret, exerts all his powers, leaps, hurries, whirls, and, to fatigue her, would willingly give his sabre, his cap, his worsted embroidery,—aye, if it had been all of gold instead!

But when the game is displeasing, the maiden is

strong to resist. Far from giving in, Françonnette confuses, tires him, till his breath is gone; passion exhausts him as much as her swiftness; his face becomes crimson — he is ready to fall — he gives in.

On goes the dance—Pascal stands in his place; he has scarcely made two steps, and changed sides, when his pretty partner smiles, reels, pauses; she is tired out, and she turns her blushing cheek to him—oh! she did not wait long for his kiss.

Instantly a shout is heard—clapping of hands in all directions: all plaudits for Pascal, who stands confused and abashed.

What a scene for the young soldier, who loved in good truth!—he shuddered as he saw the kiss given; he rose, and drew himself up to his full height. “Thou hast replaced me too quickly, peasant!” cried he, in a thundering voice; and, to enforce his insulting words, he struck the young man a violent blow.

Heavens! how ready is pain to usurp the place of the sweetest pleasure! A kiss and a blow! glory and shame! light and darkness! fire and ice! life and death! heaven and hell!

All this shook the mind of Pascal; but when a man is insulted, he can revenge himself, though he is neither gentleman nor soldier. No. Look upon him! the tempest is not more fearful. His eyes dart lightning—thunder is in his voice—he raises his arm, and it descends upon Marcel like a bolt.

In vain the soldier seeks to draw his sword—stands on his guard ; Pascal, whose size seems to increase with fury, seizes him by his waist, strains him in his grasp, and, with a fierce gripe, forces him to the ground, where he dashes him, crushed and senseless.

“ Hold !—the peasant grants your life !” cried Pascal, as he stood over him.

“ Kill him !—you are wounded—you are all blood,” exclaimed a hundred voices. Pascal’s blood flowed, he knew not how.

“ It is enough,” he returned ; “ I pardon him now. The wicked man when defeated excites only pity.”

“ No, no—kill him, tear him to pieces,” howled the enraged people.

“ Back, peasants, back !” cried a knight, spurring forward, to whom every one gave way. It was Montluc, attracted to the spot by the tumult, as he was passing with the Baron of Roquefort.

But the fête was over—no more amusement : the young girls, terrified, fled like hares, two by two, from the spot ; the young men surrounding Pascal—the handsome, brave Pascal—accompanied him on his way, as though it was his wedding-day. Marcel, furious and discomfited, struggled to renew the contest ; but his lord’s voice restrained him ; a word of command silenced him : he ground his teeth with rage, and cried—

“ They love each other,—they will do everything to thwart me. This will be but sport to her. ’Tis

well ; but by St. Marcel, my patron, they shall pay dear for this jesting, and Françonnette shall be mine, and none other's !”

PART II.

One, two, three months passed away—all fêtes, dances, games, and harvest-homes ; but all these gaieties must end with the falling leaves. All things, in winter, assume a mournful aspect,—all beneath the vault of heaven becomes aged.

After nightfall no one now ventured out : all grouped themselves around the bright hearth ; for it was known that loup-garoux, and sorcerers whose acts make the hair stand on end, and spread terror in house and hut, now kept their sabbath beneath the naked elms, and round about the straw-rick.

At length, Christmas-morning shone, and Jean the crier hastened through the town with his tambour, calling out, “ Be ready, young maidens, at the Buscou : a grand Winding meeting takes place on Friday, New Year’s Eve.”

“ Oh ! how the young girls and youths proclaimed in every quarter the news of the old crier ! his news was of that kind which, rapid as a bird, lends wings to speech. Scarcely, therefore, was the air warmed by the sun’s rays, than his intelligence was spread from hearth to hearth, from table to table, from cottage to cottage.

Friday came ; and, in the dusk of the evening, seated beside a cold forge, a mother was complaining : and thus she spoke to her son :—

“ Have you, then, forgotten the day when, before our shop, I saw you arrive, with the sound of music, faint, wounded, and bleeding? I have suffered much since, for the wound was envenomed ; we feared you must lose your arm. Let me entreat, go not out to-night—for I dreamt of flowers—what do they always announce, Pascal ?—but sorrows and tears.”

“ Dear mother, you are too timid ; all seems gloomy in your eyes ; you know Marcel comes no more amongst us ; there is now no reason for your fears.”

“ Take heed of yourself, nevertheless. The sorcerer of the Black Wood has been wandering in this neighbourhood,—you recollect the great mischief he did last year. Well, it is said that a soldier was seen to leave his cave yesterday, at day-break. Should it be Marcel ! Beware, my child. Every mother gives relics to her child—take you mine, and oh, my son, go not forth.”

“ I only ask one little hour, to see my friend, Thomas.”

“ Your friend !—ah, tell the truth, and say to see Françonnette ; for you, too, love her, like all the rest. You think I see it not—away !—I have long read it in your eyes. You fear to distress me, you

sing, you seem gay ; but you weep in secret, you suffer, you are wretched, and I am unhappy for your sake. I pine away. Hold, Pascal ! something tells me a great misfortune awaits you. She has such power over those who love her, one would say she was a witch ; but with her magic what does she seek ? Can it be fortune ?—it has been offered her twenty times, and she refuses all ; however, they say she now pretends to be attached to rich Laurent de Brax, and they are soon to be betrothed. Oh, what confusion she will make this evening, vain creature ! Think no more of her, Pascal ; leave her, it is for your good ;—hear me ! she would hold a poor blacksmith in contempt, whose father is old, infirm, and poor,—for we are poor, indeed ; alas ! you know it well. We have parted with all ; we have only a scythe left. It has been a dark time with us since you fell sick ; now that you are well, go, dearest, and work. What do I say ? we can suffer still ; rest yourself, if you please, but, for the love of God, go not forth this evening.”

And the poor mother in despair wept, as she implored her son, who, leaning against the forge, stifled a sigh which rose from his oppressed heart, and said, “ You are right, mother : I had forgotten all,—we are poor, indeed. I will go and work.”

Two minutes after, the anvil was ringing ; but whoever had seen how often the young blacksmith struck the iron falsely, would have easily seen that

he thought of something besides the hammer he held in his hand.

Meantime few had failed at the Buscou, and every one came from all parts to divide their skein at the Fête of Lovers.

In a large chamber, where already a hundred windles were turning, loaded with flax, girls and youths, with nimble fingers, were winding thread as fine as hair.

It was soon all finished; and white wine and *rimottes* were placed, boiling, in glasses and basins, from which rose a burning smoke which set the love-powder in a flame. If the prettiest there had been the most rapid, I should have pointed out Françonnette; but the Queen of the Games is the last at work, and this is the time when her reign begins.

Only listen; how she amuses every one,—how she governs and regulates all; one would say she had spirit enough for three. She dances, she speaks, she sings; she is all-in-all. When she sings, you would say she had the soul of the dove; when she talks, the wit of an angel: when she dances, you would imagine she had the wings of the swallow: and this evening she sang, and danced, and talked—oh! it was enough to turn the wisest head!

Her triumph is complete; all eyes are upon her. The poor young men can resist no more; and her bright eyes, which enchant them, shine

and sparkle as they see how the spell works. Then Thomas rose, and, looking at the lovely coquette with tender glances, sang, in a flute-toned voice, this new song :

“ Oh tell us, charming maid,
 With heart of ice unmoved,
When shall we hear the sound
Of bells that ring around,
 To say that you have loved?
Always so free and gay,
Those wings of dazzling ray,
Are spread to ev’ry air,—
And all your favour share ;
Attracted by their light,
All follow in your flight.
But, ah ! believe me, ’tis not bliss,
 Such triumphs do but purchase pain ;
What is it to be loved like this,
 To her who cannot love again ?

“ You’ve seen how full of joy
 We’ve marked the sun arise ;
Even so each Sunday morn,
 When you, before our eyes,
Bring us such sweet surprise,
With us new life is born :
 We love your angel face,
 Your step so debonaire,
Your mien of maiden grace,
 Your voice, your lip, your hair :
Your eyes of gentle fire,
All these we all admire !
But, ah ! believe me, ’tis not bliss,
 Such triumphs do but purchase pain ;
What is it to be loved like this,
 To her who cannot love again.

“ Alas ! our groves are dull,
When widowed of thy sight,
And neither hedge nor field
Their perfume seem to yield ;
The blue sky is not bright :
When you return once more,
All that was sad is gone,
All nature you restore ;
We breathe in you alone.
We could your rosy fingers cover
With kisses of delight all over !
But ah ! believe me, 'tis not bliss,
Such triumphs do but purchase pain ;
What is it to be loved like this,
To her who cannot love again !

“ The dove you lost of late,
Might warn you, by her flight ;
She sought in woods her mate,
And has forgot you quite ;
She has become more fair,
Since love has been her care.
’Tis love makes all things gay,
Oh follow where he leads—
When beauteous looks decay,
What dreary life succeeds !
And ah ! believe me, perfect bliss,
A joy, where peace and triumph reign,
Is when a maiden loved like this,
Has learnt 'tis sweet to love again.”

The song is ended ; and the crowd, delighted at its meaning, are full of applause, and clap their hands in praise.

“ Heavens ! what a song !—how appropriate ! who composed so sweet a lay ?”

“ It was Pascal,” replied Thomas.

“Bravo, Pascal,—long live Pascal!” was the general cry.

Françonnette is silent ; but she feels and enjoys it all,—she is proud, and exults : she has the love of all—of all now. It is told her, a song has been made for her ; and she hears it sung before every one—yes, every one knows she is the person meant. She thinks on Pascal, too, and becomes grave.

“He has no equal,” she mused. “How brave he is ! every one holds him in esteem ; all are on his side. How well he can paint love ! doubtless they all love him. And what a song ! what tender meaning !” Not a word has escaped her. “But, if he loves, why does he thus conceal himself ?” She turned to his friend, and exclaimed :

“It seems long since we saw him. I would fain tell him how beautiful we think his song. Where is he ?”

“Oh ! he is obliged to stay at home,” said Laurent, jealous and piqued. “Pascal has no more time, methinks, for song making. Poor man ! his ruin is not far off ; his father is infirm, and cannot leave his bed ; he is in debt everywhere ; the baker refuses to trust him.”

Françonnette became very pale. “He — so amiable—so good ! alas ! he is much to be pitied. Is he, then, indeed so wretched ?”

“Too true,” said Laurent, affecting a compassionate air. “It is said he lives on alms.”

“You have lied,” cried Thomas: “may your tongue be blistered! Pascal is unfortunate; and all has not gone well with him since he met that hurt in the arm, for Françonnette; but he is well again; and, if no envious person injures him, he will recover himself soon; for he has industry and courage.” Whoever had looked narrowly would have seen a tear in the eye of Françonnette.

The games begin: they sit in a circle; they play at *cache-couteau*. Françonnette is challenged by Laurent: he claims the kiss which she has forfeited. She flies like a bird from the fowler; he pursues; but, when he has nearly reached her, he falls, and has broken his arm.

A sudden gloom succeeds to gaiety; terror takes possession of all. When suddenly a door opens, and an aged man, whose beard hangs to his girdle, appears. He comes like a spectre: they start away in alarm; the Sorcerer of the Black Wood stands before them.

“Unthinking beings!” he exclaims, “I have descended from my rock to warn you. You all fix your thoughts upon this girl, Françonnette, who is accursed; for her father, while she was yet in her cradle, became a Huguenot, and sold her to the devil. Her mother died of grief; and the demon, who watches over that which is his, follows her everywhere in secret. He has punished Pascal and Laurent, who have sought her. Be

warned ; ill-fortune attends whoever would espouse her. The demon has alone a claim to her possession ; and her husband would fall a victim."

The sorcerer ended : sparks of fire surrounded him, and showed his wrinkled face more clearly : he turned four times round in a circle, and disappeared.

Every hearer seemed changed to stone. Franconnette alone showed signs of life : she did not give way at once to the misfortunes which threatened her : she hoped the scene would pass as a jest : she laughed cheerfully—advanced towards her friends ; but all drew back with a shudder ; all cried out, " Begone !" Then she felt she was abandoned ; a cold tremor came over her, and she fell senseless to the ground.

Thus ended a fête which had begun so gaily. The next day—the first of the year—the rumours of this event spread from house to house and from meadow to meadow.

Oh ! the terror of the evil one, which at the present day scarcely exists, at that time was fearful, particularly in the country.

A thousand things were remembered, before never dreamt of : some had heard in her cottage the noise of chains : her father had disappeared mysteriously : her mother was said to have died mad : nothing ever failed with her ; her harvest always ripened first ; and when hail destroyed other fields, her's were full of grapes and corn.

None hesitated to believe what was said ; daughters, mothers, grandmothers exaggerated the first reports ; children trembled at her name ; and, at length, when the poor girl, with depressed brow, came forth to seek necessities for her aged relative, no one spoke to her : all shrunk from her ; or, pointing with their fingers, cried out—" Fly ! behold one sold to the demon !"

PART III.

Beside the town of Estanquet, on the banks of a sparkling stream, whose waters run bubbling all the year long over the pebbles, a beautiful girl was gathering flowers, last year, amongst the turf : she sang so sweetly and so joyously, that the birds were jealous of her voice and of her song.

Why does she sing no more ? Hedges and meads are green again ; the nightingales come even into her garden to invite her to join their lays. Where is she ? Perhaps she is departed. But no ; her straw hat lies on the accustomed bench, but is no longer adorned with a bright ribbon : her little garden is neglected : her hoe and rake lie on the ground amongst the jonquils : the rose branches stray wildly ; there are thistles at their feet, and the little paths, which used to be so neat, are filled with nettles.

Something must have happened. Where is the

lively maiden? Do you not see her cottage shining white through the thick hazel branches? Let us approach: the door is open; softly—let us enter. Ah! there, in her arm-chair, sits the grandmother, asleep; and I see behind the window the fair girl of Estanquet; but she is in grief—what can ail her? Tears are falling on her little hand: some dark cloud has passed over her heart.

Oh yes! dark indeed! for yonder sits Françonnette: there she sits, bowed down with the blow which has overwhelmed her: she weeps in her chamber, and her heart knows no relief. Young girls often weep, and forget their sorrow quickly; but she——her grief is too deep, and it is one which tears cannot soften. The daughter of a Huguenot! one banished from the Church—sold to the demon! ah! it is too horrible!

The grandmother tells her in vain—“My child, it is false!” She does not listen: there is none but her father can resolve her doubts, and prove to her that it is not true; but no one knows his place of abode; she is alone—she is terrified—oh! so terrified, that she believes it.

“What a change!” she cries. “I who, but now, was so happy—I, who was Queen of the Meadows and could command all—I, for whom every youth would have gone barefooted amongst a nest of serpents—to be contemned, avoided, the terror of the

country ! And Pascal—he also flies me, as if I were a pest : yet I pitied him in his wretchedness ; perhaps he has no pity to bestow on me.”

It was not so ; and she has yet some comfort in her misery : she learns that Pascal is her defender : this is a balm to her wounded spirit ; and, as her only relief, she thinks of him often. Suddenly she hears a cry ; she flies to her grandmother, who has just waked from sleep : “ The fire is not here ; the walls do not burn ! Oh God, what a mercy ! ”

“ What were you dreaming, dear grandmother—answer me—what is it ? ” “ Unfortunate girl ! I dreamt it was night ; brutal men came to our house, and set it on fire. You cried ; you exerted yourself to save me, but you could not, and we both were burnt. Oh, I have suffered much ! come to my arms ! let me embrace my child ! ”

And the aged woman strained her in her withered arms, and pressed her tenderly to her heart, her white hair mingling with the golden ringlets of Françonnette. “ Dearest,” said she, “ your mother, the day of her marriage, came from the castle a bride ; her dower came from thence ; and thus we are not rich from the demon ; every one must know that. It is true that while you were an infant, my angel, and yet in the cradle, we heard every night a strange noise, and we found you always out of the cradle ; and on the edge of

your little bed three drops of blood appeared ; but we said a prayer, and they disappeared ; does not this prove that you are not sold to the evil one ? Some envious person has invented this. Be of good cheer, and do not weep like a child ; you are more lovely than ever : show yourself again : let your beauty once more appear. Those who hide from envy give the wicked more space. Besides, Marcel still loves you ; he has sent secretly to say he is your's when you will—you love him not ! Marcel will be your protector ; I am too old to guard you. Harken ! to-morrow is Easter-day ; go to mass, and pray more fervently than of late ; take some of the blessed bread, and sign yourself with the cross. I am certain that God will restore your lost happiness, and will prove, by your countenance, that He has not erased you from the number of those He calls his own."

The hope she had conjured up irradiated the face of the poor woman ; her child hung round her neck, and promised to do her bidding ; and peace was restored for a while to the little white cottage.

The next day, when the Hallelujah was ringing from the bells of St. Pé, great was the astonishment of all to behold Françonnette kneeling with her chaplet in the church,—her eyes cast down in prayer.

Poor girl ! well might she pray to be spared ;

there was not a young woman who spared her as she passed : the less so, that Marcel and Pascal appeared to feel pity for her. They were very cruel to her ; not one would remain near ; so that she found herself, at last, kneeling alone in the midst of a wide circle, like one condemned who has a mark of shame on his forehead. Her mortification is not yet complete, for the uncle of Marcel—the churchwarden, who wears a vest of violet with large skirts—the tall man who offers the blessed bread at Easter—passes on when she puts out her hand to take her portion, and refuses to allow her to share the heavenly meal.

This was terrible ! She believes that God has really abandoned her, and would drive her from His temple ; she trembles, and sinks back nearly fainting ; but some one advances—it is he who asks to-day for the offerings ; it is Pascal, who had never quitted her with his looks, who had seen the meaning glance which passed between the uncle and nephew—he advances softly, and taking from the shining plate that part of the bread which is crowned with a garland of choice flowers, presents it to Françonnette.

What a moment of delicious joy to her ! Her blood runs free again ; she feels no longer frozen to stone ; her soul had trembled ; but it seems as if the bread of the living God, as she touched it, had restored her life. But why is her cheek so

covered with blushes? It is because the Angel of Love had, with his breath, drawn forth the flame that slept in her heart; it is that a feeling, new, strange, subtle, like fire, sweet as honey, rises in her soul, and makes her bosom beat. Oh! it is that she lives with another life. Now, she knows herself; she feels what she really is: now she understands the magic of love. The world—the priest—all disappears; in the temple of the Lord there is but a human creature she beholds—the man she loves—the man to whom she had faltered her thanks.

Now, let us quit all the envy and jealousy that might be seen exhibited on the way-side from St. Pé, and the triple scandal of cruel tongues; let us follow Françonnette, who carries home to her grandmother the blessed bread crowned with its garland, and who, having given it into her hands, retires to her chamber *alone with her love!*

First drop of dew in the time of drought, first ray of sun-light in winter, thou art not more welcome to the bosom of the parched earth in sadness, than this first flame of affection to the awakened heart of the tender girl! Happy—overwhelmed—she forgets herself, and, by degrees, gives up all her being to the new, rapturous delight of loving!

Then, far from the noise of evil tongues, she did what we all do; she dreamt with unclosed eyes,

and without stone or implements she built herself a little castle, where, with Pascal, all was shining, all was brilliant, all was radiant with happiness. Oh! the sage is right—the soul in affliction loves the strongest!

She gave herself up entirely to her love; she feels she loves for ever, and all in nature seems to smile for her. But the honey of love too soon becomes bitter. Suddenly, she recollects herself—she shudders—she becomes as if frozen. At the stroke of a fearful thought, all her little castle is demolished. Alas! wretched girl, she dreamt of love, and love is forbidden to her. Did not the sorcerer say she was sold to the evil one, and that man bold enough to seek her would find only death in the nuptial chamber? She! must she behold Pascal dead before her?

Mercy, oh God! oh God, pity!

And, bathed in tears, the poor child fell on her knees before an image of the Virgin.

“Holy Virgin,” said she, “without thy aid I am lost; for I love deeply. I have no parents, and they say I am sold to the demon. Oh, take pity on me! save me, if it be true: and if it is but the saying of the wicked, let my soul know the truth; and when I offer thee my taper at the altar of Notre Dame, prove to me that my prayer is accepted.”

A short prayer, when it is sincere, soon mounts

to heaven. She felt certain that she was heard ; but she thought constantly of her project, though at times she shuddered, and fear rendered her mute ; still hope would come like a lightning flash in the night, and satisfy her heart.

PART IV.

At length the day arrived so feared and so desired. At daybreak long lines of young girls, all in white, extended in all directions, and advanced to the sound of the bells ; and Notre Dame, in the midst of a cloud of perfume, proudly looked down on three hamlets in one.

What censers ! what crosses ! what nosegays ! what tapers ! what banners ! what pictures ! Then come all Puymirol, Artigues, Astafort, Lusignan, Cardonnet, Saint Cirq, Brax, Roquefort ; but those of Roquefort, this year, are the first—the most numerous : and to see them in particular the curious hastened forward, for every-where, in all places, the story of the young girl sold to the demon spread, and it is known that to-day she comes to pray to the Virgin to protect her.

Her misfortune has inspired pity amongst them ; every one looks at her and laments ; they trust that a miracle will be operated in her favour, and that the Virgin will save her. She sees the feeling that she has inspired, and rejoices ; her hope becomes

stronger ; “ the voice of the people is the voice of God.”

Oh, how her heart beats as she enters the church ! everywhere within the walls are pictures of the Virgin’s mercy and indulgence ; mothers in grief, young people in affliction, girls without parents, women without children—all are kneeling with tapers before the image of the Mother of heaven, which an aged priest in his robes allows to touch their lips, and afterwards blesses them.

No sign of ill has occurred, and they believe ; all, as they rise, depart with a happy hope, and Françonnette feels the same, particularly when she sees Pascal praying devoutly ; then she has courage to look the priest in the face. It appears as if love, music, the lights, the incense—all was united to assure her of pardon.

“ Pardon ! pardon ! ” murmured she, “ oh, if that were mine ! and Pascal ”—

She lighted her taper in order, and, the light and her bouquet in her hand, she took her place. Every one, from compassion, made way that she might kneel the foremost. The silence is breathless ; there is neither movement nor gesture ; all eyes are turned on her and on the priest ; he takes the sacred image, and holds it forth to her ; but scarcely has it touched the lips of the orphan when a loud peal of thunder shakes the church, and rolls away in the distance ; her taper is extinguished, and three of those on the altar !

Her taper is extinct—her prayer rejected—she is accursed!

Oh, God! it is, then, indeed true! she has been dedicated to the evil one, and is abandoned of Heaven!

A murmur of terror spread through the crowd; and when the unfortunate girl rose, pale and wild and breathless with horror, all drew back, shuddering, and let her pass. The thunder-clap had begun the storm; fearfully it burst afterwards over Roquefort; the belfry of St. Pierre was destroyed, and the hail driving over the country, swept all away but those who wept to see the ravage.

And the pilgrims returned, all ready to relate the disaster they had seen; they returned all—except one—and sang *Ora pro nobis*.

Then, to cross the perilous waters, Agen did not possess as now—to make other towns jealous—three great bridges, as though it were a royal town. Two simple barks, urged by two oars, carried persons from one side to the other; but scarcely have they reached the opposite shore, and formed themselves in lines, than the news of the terrible event reaches them. At first, they scarcely credit its extent; but when they advance, and behold the vines and the fields desolated, then they tremble and are seized with despair, and cries of “Misery!” and “Misfortune!” rend the air.

Suddenly a voice exclaims, “Françonnette is saved

while we are ruined !” the word acts like a spark to gunpowder.

“The wretch !—drive her out !—she brings us evil—it is true—she is the cause of all—she may do us more harm !”

And the crowd clamoured louder and grew more furious. One cried, “Let us drive her from us ! cursed as she is, let her burn in flames like the *Huguenot*, her father !”

The coldest became infuriated : “Let her be driven forth !” cried all.

To see them thus enraged, with flaming eyes, clenched hands and teeth, it seemed as if Hell inspired them, and that its influence came with the breeze of night, and breathed into their veins the venom of fury.

Where was Françonnette ? alas ! in her cottage, half-dead—cold as marble ! holding firmly in her tightened and convulsive grasp the faded wreath given her by Pascal.

“Poor garland !” said she ; “when I received you from him your perfume told of happiness, and I inhaled it ; relic of love ! I bore you in my bosom, where you soon faded like my vain dreams. Dear Pascal, farewell ! my torn heart weeps to resign thee, but I must say adieu for ever ! I was born in an evil hour ; and, to save thee from my influence, I must conceal my love. Yet I feel this day thou art dearer than ever ; I love with an affection never to

be extinguished—with a devotion which is bliss or death on earth ; but death is nothing to me if it could save thee !”

“ Why do you moan thus, Françonnette ?” cried out her grandmother ; “ you told me, with a cheerful air, that the Virgin had received your offering and you were content ; yet I hear you sob like a soul in pain ; you deceive me, something has happened to you to-day.”

“ Oh, no ; be content, grandmother ; I am happy—very happy.”

“ ’Tis well, my love ; for your sorrow wrings my heart ; to-day again I passed some fearful hours ; this dream of fire recurs so often in spite of myself ; and the storms alarm me ; hark ! I tremble at every sound.”

What cries are those so near and so loud ? “ Fire them ! burn them ! let them burn together !” A flash bursts through the old shutters ; Françonnette rushes to the casement. Great Heaven ! she sees the rick on fire, and a furious mob howling outside.

“ We must drive them out—the old hag and the young one ; both have bewitched us !—Hence ! child of perdition ! hence, or burn in thy den !”

Françonnette on her knees, with streaming eyes, exclaims, “ Oh, pity for my poor old grandmother—do not kill her !”

But the deluded populace, more confirmed than ever, by her haggard looks, that she is possessed,

howl louder still—"Away with her!" and on they rush, brandishing flaming brands.

"Hold—hold!" cried a voice, and Pascal sprang amongst them. "Cowards! would you murder two defenceless women! would you burn their dwelling, as if they had not suffered enough—tigers, that you are—already the walls are hot!"

"Let the Huguenots quit the country: they are possessed by the demon. If they stay amongst us God will send down punishment. Let them go instantly, or we burn them!—Who presses forward there?"

"Ha!" cried Pascal, "Marcel here! he is her enemy!"

"Liar!" cried Marcel; "I love her better than thou, boaster as thou art! What wilt thou do for her—thou whose heart is so soft?"

"I come to assist her—to defend her."

"And I to be her husband, in spite of all, if she will be my wife."

"I come for the same purpose," cried Pascal, without shrinking from his rival's regard; then turning to Françonnette, he said, with firmness, "Françonnette, you are safe no longer; these wretches will pursue you from village to village; but here are two who love you—two who would brave death, destruction, for your sake—can you choose between us?"

"Oh, no, no! speak not of marriage. Pascal!

my love is death—go! forget me! be happy without me! I dare not be yours!”

“Happy without you! it is in vain: I love you too well; and if it be true that you are the prey of the evil one, ’twere better die with you than live away from you!”

Doubtless, the beloved voice has power above all things over the softened heart: at the last step of misery we can dare all with desperate courage. Before the assembled crowd she exclaimed: “Oh, yes, Pascal, I do love you—I would have died alone; but, since you will have it so, I resist no longer. If it is our fate—we will die together.”

Pascal is in heaven—the crowd amazed—the soldier mute. Pascal approaches him. “I am,” he said, “more fortunate than you; but you are brave, and will forgive me. To conduct me to my grave,* I require a friend—I have none—will you act the part of one?”

Marcel is silent—he muses—a great struggle is in his heart—his eye flashes—his brow is bent strongly—he gazes on Françonnette, and the paleness of death creeps over him—he shakes off his faintness, and tries to smile. “Since it is her will,” he cries, “I will be that friend.”

Two weeks had passed,—and a wedding train descended the green hill. In the front of the

* Pascal conceives that, in wedding Françonnette, he is devoted to death.

procession walked the handsome pair. A triple range of people, from all quarters, extended for more than a league : they were curious to know the fate of Pascal. Marcel is at the head of all; he directs all; there is a secret pleasure in his eye, which none can understand. One would say that to-day he triumphs; he insists on arranging the marriage, and it is he who gives to his rival the feast and the ball—his money flows liberally, his purse is open—all is profusion; but there is no rejoicing—no singing—no smiling.

The bridegroom is on the brink of the grave—his rival guides him thither, though he looks so gay—the day declines—all hearts sink with fear and pity—they would fain save Pascal, but it is too late : there they all stand motionless—but more as if at a burial than a wedding.

* Fascinated by love, the pair have sacrificed all; though the gulf yawns for them, they have no ears, no eyes, but for each other; as they pass along, hand-in-hand, the happiness of loving has absorbed all other feeling.

It is night.

A female suddenly appears: she clings round the neck of Pascal.—“ My son, leave her, leave your bride—I have seen the wise woman—the sieve has turned—your death is certain—sulphur fills the bridal chamber—Pascal, enter not in—you are lost if you remain; and I, who loved you thus, what will become of me when you are gone ? ”

Pascal's tears flowed, but he held still firmer his bride's hand within his own. The mother fell at his feet.

“Ungrateful son ! I will never leave you ! if you persist, you shall pass over my body before you enter the fatal house. A wife, then, is all-in-all—a mother nothing ! Oh ! miserable that I am !” Tears flowed from every eye.—“Marcel,” said the bridegroom, “love masters me ; should evil befall me, take charge of my mother.”

“This is too much !” cried the soldier ; “I cannot bear your mother's grief. Oh, Pascal ! be blest—be content—be fearless—Françonnette is free ! she is not sold to the evil one. It is a falsehood—a mere tale made for a purpose. But had not your mother overcome me by her tears, perhaps we should both have perished. You know—you can feel—how much I love her ; like you, I would give my life for her. I thought she loved me, for she had my very soul—all ! Yet she rejected me, though she knows we were betrothed. I saw there was no way—I devised a plan—I hired the sorcerer to raise a terror amongst all ; he forged a fearful tale, chance did the rest. I thought her then securely my own ; but when we both demanded her—when for you she braved everything—when she at once confessed how dear you were, it was beyond my power to bear. I resolved that we should both die ; I would have conducted you to the bridal chamber—a train is

laid there : all three were to have been victims ; I would have bid you cease to fear the demon, but behold in me your foe !—but it is past, the crime I had meditated is arrested. Your mother has disarmed me ; she reminds me of my own. Live, Pascal, for your mother ! you have no more to fear for me. I have now no one ; I will return to the wars ; it were better for me that, instead of perishing with a great crime on my conscience, a bullet should end my life.”

He spoke no more, and rushed from their presence : the air resounded with shouts, and the happy lovers fell into each other's arms : the stars at that moment shone out. Oh ! I must cast down my pencil—I had colours for sorrow—I have none for such happiness as theirs !

Lines by Jazmín,

ADDRESSED TO M. DUMON, DEPUTY, WHO HAD CONDEMNED OUR
OLD LANGUAGE.

THERE's not a deeper grief to man
Than when his mother, faint with years,
Decrepit, old, and weak, and wan,
Beyond the leech's art appears ;
When by her couch her son may stay,
And press her hand and watch her eyes,
And feel, though she revive to-day,
Perchance his hope to-morrow dies.

It is not thus, believe me, sir,
With this enchantress—she we call
Our second mother : Frenchmen err,
Who, cent'ries since, proclaim'd her fall !
Our mother-tongue—all melody—
While music lives, can never die.

Yes !—she still lives, her words still ring ;
Her children yet her carols sing :
And thousand years may roll away,
Before her magic notes decay.

The people love their ancient songs, and will,
While yet a people, love and keep them still :
These lays are as their mother ; they recal,
Fond thoughts of mother, sister, friends, and all
The many *little things* that please the heart—
The dreams, the hopes, from which we cannot part :
These songs are as sweet waters, where we find,
Health in the sparkling wave that nerves the mind.
In ev'ry home, at ev'ry cottage door,
By ev'ry fire-side, when our toil is o'er,
These songs are round us, near our cradles sigh,
And to the grave attend us when we die.

Oh ! think, cold critics ! 'twill be late and long,
Ere time shall sweep away this flood of song !

There are who bid this music sound no more,
 And you can hear them, nor defend—deplore !
 You, who were born where its first daisies grew,
 Have fed upon its honey, sipp'd its dew,
 Slept in its arms and wakened to its kiss,
 Danced to its sounds, and warbled to its tone—
 You can forsake it in an hour like this !
 —Yes, weary of its age, renounce—disown—
 And blame one minstrel who is true—alone !

For me, truth to my eyes made all things plain ;
 At Paris, the great fount, I did not find
 The waters pure, and to my stream again
 I come, with saddened and with sobered mind ;
 And since, no more enchanted, now I rate
 The little country far above the great.

For you—who seem her sorrows to deplore,
 You, seated high in power, the first among,
 Beware ! nor make her cause of grief the more ;
 Believe her mis'ry, nor condemn her tongue.
 Methinks you injure where you seek to heal,
 If you deprive her of that only weal.

We love, alas ! to sing in our distress ;
 It seems the bitterness of woe is less ;
 But if we may not in our language mourn,
 What will the polish'd give us in return ?
 Fine sentences, but all for us unmeet—
 Words full of grace, even such as courtiers greet :
 A deck'd-out Miss, too delicate and nice
 To walk in fields, too tender and precise
 To sing the chorus of the poor, or come
 When Labour lays him down fatigued at home.

To cover rags with gilded robes were vain—
 The rents of poverty would show too plain.

How would this dainty dame, with haughty brow,
 Shrink at a load, and shudder at a plough !

Sulky, and piqued, and silent would she stand
 As the tired peasant urged his team along :
 No word of kind encouragement at hand,
 For flocks no welcome, and for herds no song !

Yet we will learn, and you shall teach—
 Our people shall have double speech :
 One to be homely, one polite,
 As you have robes for diff'rent wear,
 But this is all:—'tis just and right,
 And more our children will not bear.
 Lest we a troop of buzzards own,
 Where nightingales once sang alone.

There may be some, who, vain and proud,
 May ape the manners of the crowd,
 Lisp French, and lame it at each word,
 And jest and gibe to all afford:—
 But we, as in long ages past,
 Will still be poets to the last !

Hark ! and list the bridal song,
 As they lead the bride along :
 "Hear, gentle bride ! your mother's sighs,*
 And you would hence away !—
 Weep, weep, for tears become those eyes."
 ———" I cannot weep—to-day."

Hark ! the farmer in the mead
 Bids the shepherd swain take heed :
 "Come, your lambs together fold,
 Haste, my sons ! your toil is o'er :
 For the morning bow has told
 That the ox should work no more."

Hark ! the cooper in the shade
 Sings to the sound his hammer made :

* Jasmin here quotes several *patois* songs, well known in the country.

"Strike, comrades, strike ! prepare the cask,
 'Tis lusty May that fills the flask :
 Strike, comrades ! summer suns that shine
 Fill the cellars full of wine."

Verse is, with us, a charm divine,
 Our people, loving verse, will still,
 Unknowing of their art, entwine
 Garlands of poesy at will.
 Their simple language suits them best :
 Then let them keep it and be blest.

But let wise critics build a wall
 Between the nurse's cherish'd voice,
 And the fond ear her words enthrall,
 And say their idol is her choice :
 Yes !—let our fingers feel the rule,
 The angry chiding of the school ;
 True to our nurse, in good or ill,
 We are not French, but Gascon still.

'Tis said that age new feeling brings,
 Our youth returns as we grow old ;
 And that we love again the things,
 Which in our memory had grown cold.
 If this be true, the time will come
 When to our ancient tongue, once more,
 You will return, as to a home,
 And thank us that we kept the store.

Remember thou the tale they tell,
 Of Lacuée and Lacedèpe,*
 When age crept on, who loved to dwell,
 On words that once their music made :
 And, in the midst of grandeur, hung,
 Delighted, on their parent tongue.

This, will you do : and it may be,
 When, weary of the world's deceit,

* Both Gascons.

Some summer-day we yet may see
Your coming in our meadows sweet ;
Where, midst the flowers, the finch's lay
Shall welcome you with music gay.
While you shall bid our antique tongue
Some word devise, or air supply,
Like those that charm'd your youth so long
And lent a spell to memory !

Bethink you how we stray'd alone,
Beneath those elms in Agen grown,
That each an arch above us throws,
Like giants, hand-in-hand, in rows.

A storm once struck a fav'rite tree,
It trembled, shook, and bent its boughs,—
The vista is no longer free :
Our governor no pause allows.
“ Bring hither hatchet, axe, and spade,
The tree must straight be prostrate laid ! ”

But vainly strength and art were tried,
The stately tree all force defied.
Well might the elm resist and foil their might,
For though his branches were decay'd to sight,
As many as his leaves the roots spread round,
And in the firm set earth they slept profound !

Since then, more full, more green, more gay,
His crests amidst the breezes play :
And birds of ev'ry note and hue
Come trooping to his shade in Spring,
Each Summer they their lays renew,
And while the year endures they sing.

And thus it is, believe me, sir,
With this enchantress—she we call
Our second mother ; Frenchmen err,
Who, cent'ries since, proclaim'd her fall.

No: she still lives, her words still ring;
 Her children yet her carols sing,
 And thousand years may roll away
 Before her magic notes decay.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE GASCON POET.

To the Bordelais, on the grand Fête given me at the Casino.

IN a far land, I know not where,
 Ere viol's sigh, or organ's swell,
 Had made the sons of song aware
 That music is a potent spell,
 A shepherd to a city came,
 Play'd on his pipe, and rose to fame.
 He sang of fields, and at each close
 Applause from ready hands arose.

The simple swain was hail'd and crown'd
 In mansions where the great reside,
 And cheering smiles and praise he found,
 And in his heart rose honest pride:
 All seem'd with joy and rapture gleaming,—
 He trembled that he was but dreaming.

But, modest still, his soul was moved;
 Yet of his hamlet was his thought,—
 Of friends at home, and her he loved,—
 When back his laurel-branch he brought:
 And, pleasure beaming in his eyes,
 Enjoy'd their welcome and surprise.

'Twas thus with me, when Bordeaux deign'd
 To listen to my rustic song;
 Whose music praise and honour gain'd
 More than to rural strains belong.

Delighted, charm'd, I scarcely knew
Whence sprung this life so fresh and new.
And to my heart I whisper'd low,
 When to my fields return'd again,
"Is not the Gascon Poet now
 As happy as the shepherd swain?"

The minstrel never can forget
The spot where first success he met;
But he, the shepherd who, of yore,
 Had charm'd so many a list'ning ear,
Came back, and was beloved no more;—
 He found all changed and cold and drear!
A skilful hand had touch'd *the flute*;—
His *pipe* and he were scorn'd—were mute.

But I, once more I dared appear,
And found old friends as true and dear—
The mem'ry of my ancient lays
Lived in their hearts—awoke their praise.
Oh! they did more;—I was their guest;
Again was welcomed and caress'd:
And, twined with their melodious tongue,
Again my rustic carol rung;
And my 'old language proudly found
Her words had list'ners, pressing round.
Thus, though condemn'd the shepherd's skill,
The Gascon Poet triumph'd still.

I returned by Agen, after an absence in the Pyrenees of some months, and renewed my acquaintance with Jasmin and his dark-eyed wife. I did not expect that I should be recognised; but the moment I entered the little shop I was hailed as an old friend. "Ah!" cried Jasmin, "enfin la

voilà encore !” I could not but be flattered by this recollection, but soon found it was less on my own account that I was thus welcomed, than because a circumstance had occurred to the poet which he thought I could perhaps explain. He produced several French newspapers, in which he pointed out to me an article headed “*Jasmin à Londres ;*” being a translation of certain notices of himself, which had appeared in a leading English literary journal.* He had, he said, been informed of the honour done him by numerous friends, and assured me his fame had been much spread by this means; and he was so delighted on the occasion, that he had resolved to learn English, in order that he might judge of the translations from his works, which, he had been told, were well done. I enjoyed his surprise, while I informed him that I knew who was the reviewer and translator; and explained the reason for the verses giving pleasure in an English dress, to be the superior simplicity of the English language over modern French, for which he has a great contempt, as unfitted for lyrical composition. He inquired of me respecting Burns, to whom he had been likened; and begged me to tell him something of Moore. The delight of himself and his wife was amusing, at having discovered a secret which had puzzled them so long.

* The Athenæum.

He had a thousand things to tell me; in particular, that he had only the day before received a letter from the Duchess of Orleans, informing him that she had ordered a medal of her late husband to be struck, the first of which would be sent to him: she also announced to him the agreeable news of the king having granted him a pension of a thousand francs. He smiled and wept by turns, as he told all this; and declared, much as he was elated at the possession of a sum which made him a rich man for life, the kindness of the duchess gratified him even more.

He then made us sit down while he read us two new poems; both charming, and full of grace and *naïveté*; and one very affecting, being an address to the king, alluding to the death of his son. As he read, his wife stood by, and fearing we did not quite comprehend his language, she made a remark to that effect: to which he answered impatiently, “Nonsense—don’t you see they are in tears.” This was unanswerable; and we were allowed to hear the poem to the end; and I certainly never listened to anything more feelingly and energetically delivered.

We had much conversation, for he was anxious to detain us, and, in the course of it, he told me that he had been by some accused of vanity. “Oh!” he rejoined, “what would you have! I am a child of nature, and cannot conceal my

feelings ; the only difference between me and a man of refinement is, that he knows how to conceal his vanity and exultation at success, which I let everybody see."

His wife drew me aside, and asked my opinion as to how much money it would cost to pay Jasmin's expenses, if he undertook a journey to England : " However," she added, " I dare say he need be at no charge, for, of *course*, your queen has read *that article* in his favour, and knows his merit ; she will probably send for him, pay all the expenses of his journey, and give him great fêtes in London." I recommended the barber-poet to wait *till he was sent for* ; and left the happy pair, promising to let them know the effect that the translation of Jasmin's poetry produced on the royal mind :—their earnest simplicity was really entertaining.

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